

FORERUNNERS

RAWLINSON

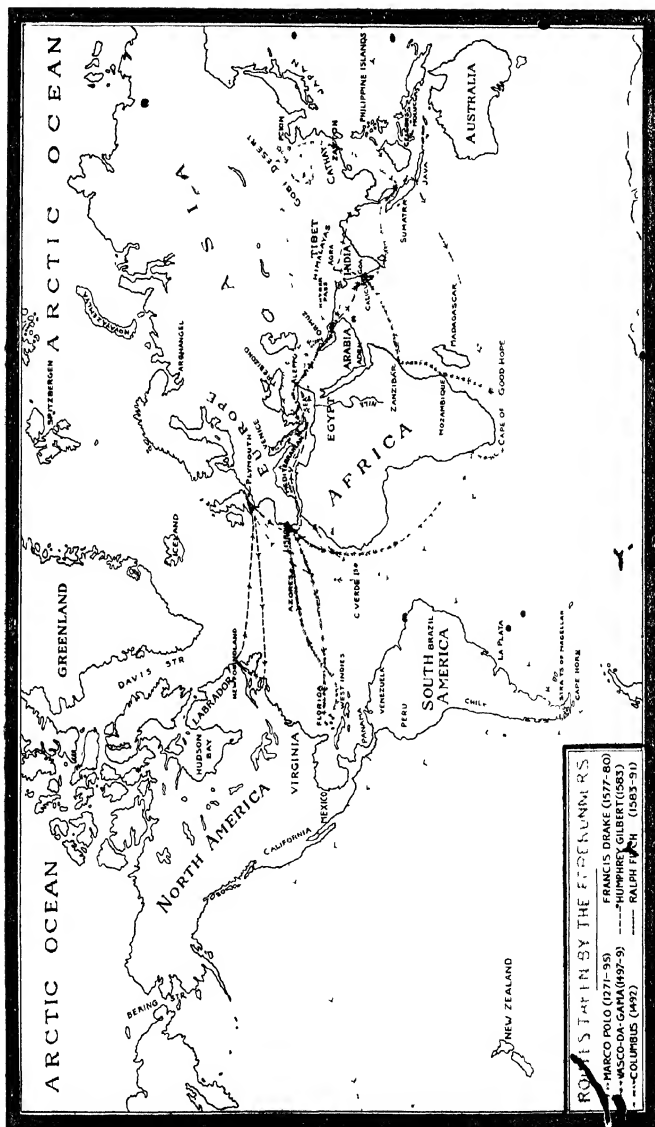


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Stories of Old-time Travel for Younger Folk

By

H. G. RAWLINSON

INDIAN EDUCATIONAL SERVICE



OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

LONDON, BOMBAY, CALCUTTA, MADRAS

1929

Published by Humphrey Milford at the Oxford University Press
B. I. Building, Nicol Road, Bombay
and
Printed by V. P. Pendherkar, at the Tutorial Press
211a, Girgaum Back Road, Bombay

PREFACE

It may, perhaps, be as well to explain my object in writing these travel-stories. I wrote them, first of all, just because they *are* good stories. Truth, says the well-worn adage, is stranger than fiction. It is also vastly more interesting, chiefly because what men have actually dared and done is far more thrilling and awe-inspiring than the most improbable tale which the most fertile imagination can invent. Hence I hope that my young readers, if I have the good fortune to have any, will enjoy these stories, first and foremost, just because they are the life-history of some of the noblest and most gallant men who ever lived. It will also bring home to them, I hope, the great truth that gallantry does not consist merely in fighting. "They also serve, who only stand and wait," and of the heroes of travel here depicted, at least half were peaceful men, who, in all their long wanderings, never saw a shot fired or a blow struck in anger. Thirdly, I hope that my readers will realize that valour is not the monopoly of one age or one nation. Of the travellers whose adventures are here narrated, one was a Greek, two were Chinese, two Italians, one a

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Portuguese, one a Mohammedan, and others English. They belong to all ages, from the third century B. C. to the sixteenth century A. D. Equally varied were their motives. Only one was a conqueror pure and simple. Others, like the heroic Chinese pilgrims and, to a great extent, the Portuguese, were impelled by religious motives. Others again, were plain merchants. Another, the jovial Ibn Batuta, travelled for the excellent reason that he liked it. But all had one common characteristic, which makes their story full of interest and value for us to-day, and that was Courage. Courage and Faith—these were the magic talismans which carried the Macedonian legionary from distant Greece through the beetling crags of the Khyber Pass, and brought the old Chinese pilgrims safely through the burning deserts of Central Asia and the snowy fastnesses of the Himalayas, and the tiny storm-tossed galleons of Vasco da Gama over thousands of miles of trackless ocean to the coasts of Malabar. All of these brave men had, as the poet sings,

One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will,
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

“These are the notes,” says R. L. Stevenson,
“which please the great heart of man. Not only

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love, and the fields, and the bright face of danger, but sacrifice and death, and unmerited suffering humbly supported, touch us in the vein of the poetic. We love to think of them, we long to try them, we are humbly hopeful that we may prove heroes also."

Many of these "Forerunners", again, had, at the back of their minds, the most cogent of all impelling causes in history, the economic factor. Discovery is, in nine cases out of ten, undertaken by some gallant body of pioneers, because their countrymen are in urgent need of something—new countries in which to expand, or vital articles of food, clothing or commerce, without which they cannot maintain the struggle for existence.

Hence, therefore, while I trust that these stories will be read primarily as stories, and because they give us the noblest examples of heroism, self-denial and self-sacrifice, on which to base our own lives and conduct, I hope that they will also serve for other purposes as well. They should, I think, impress upon us the importance of the economic side of history, and I also venture to hope that my readers will find them sufficiently interesting to tempt them to dip more deeply into the historic background of the times, countries, and peoples to which

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they relate. Many of these travellers have preserved details, of priceless value, about the royal courts which they visited, and the manners and customs which they came across in the course of their wanderings. A teacher, therefore, has excellent opportunities for making these "travellers' tales" a basis for valuable and varied historical lessons. And lastly, I most earnestly recommend that every reader of this book, whether pupil or teacher, will keep an atlas by his side as he peruses it. I hope that he will plot out carefully on a good map the itinerary of each traveller as he reads his narrative. For if he does this, he will find at the end that he has acquired a fund of information about the world, and the great trade-routes which in all ages have linked it together. Geography is often neglected, because it appears at first sight to be a dull and rather colourless subject. Studied in this way, it will quickly appear not only useful and instructive, but supremely fascinating. Nothing is more attractive than a map, when once the charm of map-reading has penetrated the mind.

H. G. RAWLINSON

Poona, 1929

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CHAPTER I

THE COMING OF THE YAVANAS

It was in the year 327 B. C. that the Raja of Taxila, that old Indian university town not very far from Rawalpindi near the banks of the Indus, first heard of the approach of the Yavanas from the west. Now these Yavanas were no new people to the Indians of the Punjab. Centuries ago, when the great king Darius had annexed part of the Punjab to his empire, a Yavana officer, Skylax of Karyanda, had been employed to survey the Indus, and to explore the Persian Gulf with a view to sea traffic. Punjabi soldiers enlisted in the Great King's army, as they do in the British army to-day. Survivors from the disastrous campaign in Greece in 480 B. C. must have found their way back to their native villages, and have talked of the wonderful city of Athens, as the sepoys of yesterday talked to their friends about the glories of London and Paris. And now, to cap these dim memories, came stories of incredible happenings. The Great King of Persia, whom all the world thought invincible, had been routed in a series of pitched battles;

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his ancient capital had been burnt to the ground, and he himself, a hunted fugitive, had perished by the roadside from the blows of traitors. Furthermore, the camel drivers, bringing their laden packs from beyond the passes, had seen these terrible Yavanas themselves! They were marching in endless files down the caravan road which runs from Balkh to the Khyber Pass, 30,000 strong, mail-clad infantry with their long pikes and shining shields, the terrible cavalry, clad in complete mail, which had routed the Persians in battle after battle, and clouds of light-armed troops guarding their flanks. Small wonder that Raja Ambhi decided to send an embassy to Alexander, offering him an alliance. One reason for his action was, perhaps, that he had a powerful rival, the Paurava prince who lived on the further banks of the Jhelum river, and he wished for Alexander's help against him. Unfortunately, neither now nor many centuries later, when the Mohammedan armies followed in Alexander's track, had these gallant Hindu princes learned the lesson of co-operation against a common enemy. In the beginning of the cold weather of 327, Alexander advanced through the mountain-passes into India. He split his army into two portions for the purpose; one marched down

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the famous defile of the Khyber, while the other, under the king himself, took a more easterly route through the hills. It was absolutely necessary for Alexander to leave his lines of communication clear, and in order to do so, many of the brave and independent hill-rajās, living in their rock-citadels, had to be subdued. Then as now, the valiant tribesmen fought to the death rather than surrender their freedom, and much stern and cruel fighting took place in these wild hills. Once Alexander put to the sword 7,000 Indian mercenary soldiers, and during November and December, he was busily employed in laying siege to the great virgin-fortress of Aornos, 7,000 feet high, and washed by the river Indus. Aornos had never before been captured, but Alexander's men at last found a way to the summit, and the garrison fled in the night.

And now Alexander was free to advance. In January 326 B. C. his army reached the Indus, and crossed that mighty river somewhere close to where it is now spanned by the great bridge at the Attock gorge. Before crossing Alexander gave his army a holiday for thirty days. Sports were held, with wrestling and gymnastic contests, and magnificent sacrifices were offered up, with solemn prayers, to all the gods of Greece. For

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one of the most important events in the world was now about to take place. For the first time in history, European invaders were about to enter the sacred land of India! As the Macedonians advanced to Taxila, the Raja came out to meet them with his whole army, and escorted them to his capital. The Indian populace turned out in crowds to see the strange western soldiers and to welcome them to their city. Great darbars were held with interchange of magnificent presents, and more games and sacrifices to the gods. Only in one quarter did Alexander find no welcome. The old Yogis, sitting naked in the burning sun, told the great conqueror quite bluntly, that if he wished to learn the secrets of their wisdom, he must strip himself of his jewelled cloak and silver armour, and become as one of them!

The neighbouring rajas, by this time, were sending in their submissions from every direction. But the Paurava monarch, (Porus, the Greeks called him,) when called upon to do likewise, proudly replied that he would indeed come to meet the invader, but at the head of his army. It was in April that Alexander moved out to accept the challenge of his opponent, who was drawn up to meet him on the further bank of the Jhelum river. For many days, the two

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armies faced one another on opposite banks. The Indian raja, with his formidable array of elephants, was watching every ford and crossing, and to try and land in the face of so brave a foe was an impossibility. But as time went on, the Indian forces began to relax their vigilance. Night after night, commotions in the camp of the Yavanas, the blowing of trumpet-calls and the shouting of orders, had brought the weary Indian troops to their stations, only to find that it was another false alarm. But on one night, a violent thunderstorm had raged until almost daybreak, making it impossible to hear or see what was happening on the further side of the river. In the morning, an Indian trooper galloped in to say that a picked force of Yavana cavalry, under cover of the darkness, had slipped away, and had forded the river twenty miles up stream! Too late, Porus detached his son, with 2,000 horse and 120 chariots, to meet the foe. The gallant prince, charging at the head of his troops, was cut down; the chariots stuck in the mud, and his men were scattered to the four winds of heaven. And now Porus saw that battle was inevitable. The day of reckoning had come, and he went to meet it unflinchingly. The Indian army extended for action. The centre was formed

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of two hundred war elephants, huge brutes whose very smell terrified horses, and of whose behaviour in battle the Greeks had no experience. Behind them, line upon line, were the infantry, while the flanks were guarded by 4,000 cavalry and 300 war-chariots. In front, conspicuous by his size and his magnificent armour, sat the Indian king on an elephant which towered above the rest.

The battle began with a cavalry charge, led by Alexander himself, which broke up the cavalry and chariots protecting the Indian left wing. Meanwhile, another body of cavalry had been working round the opposite flank, and threatening the Indian troops from the rear. The whole Greek army now advanced, and assailed the elephants with a shower of darts and missiles, until the poor brutes, maddened with pain, broke rank and charged hither and thither, trampling upon friend and foe alike. The confusion was completed when the remaining Greek troops crossed the river and joined in the attack. Porus remained to the last, surrounded by foes and desperately wounded. At length, seeing that all was lost, he slowly retreated. But a horseman galloped after him and brought a message from Alexander, inviting Porus to meet him. A few minutes later, and



ALEXANDER IN BATTLE

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the two great soldiers, the conqueror and the conquered, were face to face. "How do you demand to be treated?" asked Alexander. "Act as a king," replied Porus; and when pressed he added, "When I said, 'as a king', everything was contained in *that*." Alexander was so delighted by his reply, that he restored him to his kingdom as a friend and ally. And so ended the first great clash of arms between European and Indian on Indian soil.

But Alexander still thirsted for new worlds to conquer. He had heard of the immense and opulent kingdoms in the fertile country watered by the great river Ganges, and he pressed on thither. But on the banks of the Beas, not far, perhaps, from the modern Gurdaspur, the weary soldiery at length rebelled, and Alexander was forced to retrace his steps. To mark the furthest limits of his advance, he erected twelve altars of a towering height, and long afterwards, it is said, the Mauryan kings came thither to offer sacrifices.

Alexander now determined to do what Darius the Great had partly done,—to move down the Indus to its source, and to retrace his way homeward partly by land and partly by sea. The Indus was to be the eastern limit of his empire, and as such, it must be thoroughly

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explored. And so, on a day in November 326 B. C., the army assembled for its southward march, the baggage and horses going by water and the rest of the troops marching along the banks. At dawn, the king poured libations from a bowl of gold to the river-gods, and the bugles sounded the advance. At one walled city, near Multan perhaps, the population resisted stoutly, and Alexander, leading a storming party to the breach, leapt down alone among his foes and was all but slain. And so the armada moved slowly seawards. In the middle of July 325 B. C., Patala was reached, and at length the ocean was sighted. It must have been in the following September that the Macedonian conqueror left India for ever. For three and a half years, he had marched through the Punjab and Sind, from Peshawar to Karachi, and during all that period, he had not lost a single battle. Of his subsequent adventures, the disastrous return through the Mekran desert, and the amazing voyage of the fleet under Nearchus up the Persian Gulf, I have no space to tell you here : you must read for yourselves the books which historians have written about these things. Alexander had fully intended to make the Punjab and Sind a part of his empire ; but on his sudden death from fever at Babylon in the summer

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of 323 B. C. the whole of this great imperial dream vanished into thin air, and the Greeks were swept out of the Indus valley as suddenly and dramatically as they came.

But you must not think of Alexander the Great as a mere conqueror who came, as Mahmud of Ghazni and Tamerlane and other invaders came, to raid, plunder and depart. All Alexander's campaigns were constructive. He always regarded himself as the Apostle of Hellenism, of that beautiful Greek culture which he spread in the footsteps of his armies wherever he went. And India had the full benefit of this. The great Maurya monarch, Chandragupta, had a Greek ambassador permanently at his court at Pataliputra, and when Asoka bethought himself of sending missionaries to preach the *Dharma* of the Lord Buddha, his first thought was for his western friends, the Yavana rulers of Asia Minor, Greece and Egypt. Many years later, a dynasty of Greeks, descendants of Alexander's colonists at Balkh, came to dwell in the Punjab, and from them the Indian artists learnt the art which enabled them to carve those wonderful sculptures of the Buddha's life which you will see, perhaps, one day, if you go to the Ajaib Garh in Lahore, or better still, if you make a trip to Taxila, where those industrious

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people, the archæologists, have dug up the old city where Alexander and his troopers enjoyed the hospitality of Raja Ambhi before they sallied forth to meet the Paurava hosts at the battle of the Jhelum River.

CHAPTER II

THE TRAVELS OF FA HIAN AND HIUEN TSIANG

The story which I am now about to try to tell you is a very different one from the last. Alexander the Great was a true *Chakravarti*, a great world conqueror who came to India to conquer and rule over others. Very different was the errand of the poor, penniless Chinese pilgrims who came, alone or in little bands, for thousands of miles across trackless deserts and almost impassable mountain ranges, to visit the places where the Lord Buddha had sojourned and preached during his life upon earth ; to study the Sacred Books in the original language in which He had taught, and to take back manuscripts and relics for their countrymen in distant China. Yet, who will dare to say that these humble seekers after knowledge, sustained in their sufferings only by their great faith, were any less courageous than the great conqueror himself ?

Fa Hian, the earliest of these pilgrims, set out from China to India with five companions in 400 A. D. After nine months of travelling, the pilgrims found themselves on the confines

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of the Lop Nor Desert. Crossing the desert was a terrible business ! For seventeen days they toiled across the burning sands, meeting neither man, nor beast, nor bird, and all the way the path was marked by skeletons and carcasses of those who had died before them. At last they reached the Khotan river, and following the stream, they arrived at the little Buddhist kingdom of Khotan. Khotan was then a flourishing state : the travellers received a warm welcome, and having refreshed themselves, set out once more upon the quest. Fresh perils now awaited them. Toiling along the bed of the Yarkand river, they came to the towering mountain-passes which guard the Indian frontier. The crossing was a trying ordeal.

“The road,” says Fa Hian, “was difficult and broken, with steep crags and precipices in the way. The mountain-side is simply a stone wall, standing up 10,000 feet. Looking down, the sight is confused, and on going forward, there is no sure foothold. Below is a river called the Sin-tu-ho (Indus). In old days, men bored through the rocks to make a way, and spread out ladders, of which there are seven hundred steps to pass in all. Having descended the ladders, we proceed by a hanging rope-bridge and cross the river.” Here they rested awhile

FA HIAN AND HIUEN TSIANG

in a little state in the Swat valley, before pressing on to the great frontier city of Purushapura, or Peshawar, as we now call it. But now they were overtaken, in the heart of these wild mountain, by a fierce blizzard. Two of Fa Hian's companions turned back in despair. Another died in a wayside monastery. A third perished in a snow storm in Fa Hian's arms. "Hin King was unable to go further. His mouth was covered with white froth : and at last he addressed Fa Hian and said 'I am beyond recovery : do you leave me and press on, lest you all perish.' And so he died. And Fa Hian cherished him and called him by his familiar name, but all in vain."

At last, with only a single companion left, Fa Hian found himself on the confines of the promised land. It was the golden age of Hindu prosperity. The Gupta Empire was at the height of its power and glory, unhampered by internal dissension, or invasion from without. Classical Sanskrit was reaching perfection, thanks to the liberal policy of the court, where the great *Nava Ratna*, the 'nine gems' of literature, received support and encouragement. Art flourished and the Emperor himself¹ was said to be an accom-

¹ Chandra Gupta II, 375-413 A. D.

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plished dramatist, poet and musician. This is how Fa Hian describes his impressions of India as he saw it at the beginning of the fifth century.

“The inhabitants,” he says, “are prosperous and happy. Only those who farm the royal estates pay any portion of the produce as rent; and they are not bound to remain in possession longer than they like. The King inflicts no corporal punishment, but merely fines the offenders, and even those convicted of incitement to rebellion, after repeated attempts, are only punished with the loss of the right hand. The Chief Ministers have fixed salaries allotted to them. The people of the country drink no intoxicants and kill no animals for food, except the Chandalas or Pariahs; and these alone eat garlic or onions. The Pariahs live outside the walls; if they enter the town, they have to strike a gong with a piece of wood to warn passers-by not to touch them.

“In this country they do not keep swine or fowls, and do not deal in cattle; they have no shambles or wine-shops in their market-places. In commerce they use cowrie-shells. The Pariahs alone hunt and sell flesh. Down from the time of the Lord Buddha’s Nirvana the kings, chief men, and householders have raised *viharas* for

the monks, and have provided for their support by endowing them with fields, houses, gardens, servants, and cattle. These church-lands are guaranteed to them by copperplate grants, which are handed down from reign to reign, and no one has had the temerity to cancel them. All the resident priests, who are allotted cells in the *viharas*, have beds, mats, food, and drink supplied to them; they pass their time in performing acts of mercy, in reciting the scriptures, or in meditation. When a stranger arrives at the monastery, the senior priests escort him to the guest-house, carrying his robes and his alms-bowl for him. They offer him water to wash his feet, and oil for anointing, and prepare a special meal for him. After he has rested awhile they ask him his rank in the priesthood, and according to his rank they assign him a chamber and bedding. During the month after the Rain-rest, the pious collect a united offering for the priesthood; and the priests in their turn hold a great assembly and preach the Law. . . . When the priests have received their dues, the householders and Brahmins present them with all sorts of robes and other necessities; and the priests also make one another offerings. And so, ever since the Lord Buddha passed away from the earth, the rules

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of conduct of the priesthood have been handed down without intermission."

The centre of gravity, however, had moved westwards from Pataliputra to Ayodhya, and when Fa Hian visited the old Maurya capital, he found it half-deserted. The great granite blocks, of which the palace was built, were popularly supposed to have been the work of *jinn*s! Gaya, where the Master had obtained Buddhahood, and Kapilavastu, the Buddhist Bethlehem, were covered with dense jungle. At the cave on the hill called Vulture's Peak, where the Blessed One had dwelt so often, Fa Hian was moved to tears. His work was now accomplished, and the time had come to retrace his steps. But Fa Hian's companion determined to stay in India. "He was captivated with the decorum of the priests, their religious deportment, their unworldliness in the midst of temptation, all of which was in sad contrast to the meagre knowledge and unhappy condition of the Buddhist order in China." Perhaps, also, he was not unmindful of the perils of his journey thither, for he took a vow, saying, "May I never, until I attain Buddhahood, be reborn in a frontier land!"

Quite alone now, the stout old pilgrim determined to press on. He had heard of the

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wonderful Buddhist relics in distant Ceylon, and travelling by easy stages to the coast, he took ship thither. He saw the sacred city of Anuradhapura, now a picturesque ruin half smothered in jungle, in the height of its glory. There was the Sacred Tooth, and the branch of the Bodhi tree from Gaya planted by Asoka's own brother. The Dagabas, coated with gold, reared their stately heads among the surrounding trees; the brazen roofs of the *viharas* glittered in the sun. But one day, Fa Hian saw a merchant offering a Chinese fan of white taffeta. The sight brought a rush of memories to his heart and he burst into tears. "He had been absent from his home of his fathers for many years. The manners of the people he met were strange, and the plants, trees, towns and people were quite unlike those of old times. His companions were some of them dead and lying in the distant mountain-passes, and others had left him: to think of the past was his only consolation." He determined to take ship for China. But Fa Hian's troubles were not yet at an end. His ship was caught in a storm, and everything, including his begging bowl, was cast overboard. The pilgrim was terrified that his precious relics and manuscripts might follow suit, but the Blessed One heard his

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prayers and the storm abated. On another occasion during the typhoon, the sailors, who began to regard Fa Hian as a kind of Jonah, were about to maroon him on a desert island, when a courageous officer intervened. "I will go straight to the king on our return," he threatened, "and tell him of your crime, and he, I know, is a Buddhist. So if you kill this monk, you had better kill me also." At last China hove in sight, and the pilgrim, after nearly twenty years' absence, once more set foot on his native soil. With true modesty, he says that he merely set down his amazing adventures "in order to satisfy the curiosity of numerous enquirers". It is difficult, in all the annals of travel, to find a more attractive figure than Fa Hian. His gentle, modest, and unassuming demeanour hid a vast amount of knowledge, keen and shrewd powers of observation, and persistence, courage, and endurance which have seldom been equalled.

Some two centuries after the return of Fa Hian, the call came to Hiuen Tsiang, a young Buddhist priest of Honan, popularly known as the Master of the Law, on account of his deep learning. The time was unpropitious, for the Emperor had issued an edict, forbidding travellers to visit India; but he slipped away

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quietly to a frontier post on the edge of the Gobi Desert. Now, before he had set out, a soothsayer, whom he consulted, had said, "Sir, you may go: the appearance of your person as you go is that of one riding on an old red horse, thin and starved; the saddle is varnished, and in front it is bound with iron." And, behold, he now met an old traveller, who offered to sell him just such a horse, "lean and of a red colour, with a varnished saddle bound with iron!" In crossing the desert, Hiuen Tsiang had to face even greater perils than those which beset Fa Hian on a similar occasion. The wells were guarded by troops, and the sentries fired on any one who approached their posts. In order to avoid this danger, the Master made a long detour; his water-bottle burst, and for four days and nights he wandered over the burning sands, semi-delirious. Hiuen Tsiang was on the point of collapse when, as if by a miracle, behind a sandy ridge, he reached a green oasis, with a spring of bubbling water and fresh grass! Himself and horse being refreshed, he pushed on to a desolate little wayside monastery called Igu, where three old Chinese monks burst into tears at seeing a fellow-countryman's face. And so the Master of the Law and the "lean red horse" jogged on from

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town to town. At one spot, at the foot of the Thian Shan mountains, he routed, in a debate conducted on formal lines, a rival doctor named Moksha Gupta, and after that, "if Moksha Gupta met Hiuen Tsiang, he did not sit down, but spoke standing, as if in a hurry to get on." The passes were now declared to be open, and Hiuen Tsiang attached himself to a caravan. But it was early in the year, and all suffered severely. Twelve of the travellers perished, some from cold, others in falling down crevasses, and others again in avalanches. From Tashkend the Master of the Law travelled to Balkh, and from Balkh to Kabul. It was in a cave near Jalalabad that Hiuen Tsiang had a vision which greatly comforted him. "Whilst the whole cave was brightened up with light, the shadow of the Blessed One, of shining white colour, appeared on the wall. Bright were the divine lineaments of his face, and as the Master gazed in awe and reverence, he knew not how to compare the spectacle. On the left and right of the shadow and somewhat behind, were visible the shadows of Bodhisattvas and the holy priests surrounding them." The vision lasted about "half a mealtime", and of the spectators, five saw the Blessed One plainly, and the sixth saw nothing.

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After travelling through Gandhara, with its wealth of relics, shrines, and monasteries, the Master of the Law slowly made his way to Kanauj, for he had heard that the mighty Emperor Harsha, who held his court there, was a great patron of learning and religion. Here he was cordially welcomed, and he soon gained such a reputation as a debater that rival theologians made a conspiracy and planned to take his life. But the Emperor issued an order that "if anyone should touch or hurt the Master of the Law he should forthwith be beheaded; and whosoever spoke against him, should have his tongue cut out". After that, rival debaters, we are told, were reluctant to enter into discussions with him. Hiuen Tsiang had many interesting experiences in India. He was present at a great religious festival, when a life-size golden image of the Buddha was enshrined in a tower a hundred feet high and the Emperor himself carried a similar but smaller one on his shoulder, escorted by twenty rajas and three hundred elephants. He was present at the extraordinary religious fair at Prayaga (Allahabad) when the Emperor distributed all his possessions, down to his own robes and jewels, to crowds of religious mendicants of various sects.

Hiuen Tsiang travelled far and wide in India and his observations are extraordinarily shrewd

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and interesting. Of the ancestors of the modern Marathas, then living under the Chalukya raja, Pulakesi, he says, "Their manners are simple and honest. They are tall, haughty, and supercilious in character. Whoever does them a service, may count on their gratitude, but he that offends them will not escape their revenge. If anyone insults them, they will risk their lives to wipe out the affront. If one apply to them in difficulty, they will forget to care for themselves in order to fly to his assistance. When they have an injury to avenge, they never fail to give warning to their enemy ; after which, each dons his cuirass and grasps his spear in his hand. In battles they pursue the fugitives, but do not slay those who give themselves up. When a general has lost a battle, instead of punishing him corporally, they make him wear woman's clothes, and by that force him to sacrifice his own life."

Of the common people, he gives this vivid picture :—

"The people's clothes are not cut or fashioned : they mostly affect fresh white garments : they esteem little those of mixed colour or ornamented. The men wind their garments round their middle, then gather them under the armpits, and let them fall across the body, hanging

to the right. The Kshattriyas and Brahmins are cleanly and wholesome in their dress, and they live in a homely and frugal way. There are rich merchants who deal in gold trinkets and so on. They mostly go bare-footed ; few wear sandals. They stain their teeth red or black ; they bind up their hair and pierce their ears. They are very particular in their personal cleanliness. All wash before eating : they never use food left over from a former meal. Wooden and stone vessels must be destroyed after use : metal ones must be well polished and rubbed. After eating they cleanse their mouths with a willow stick and wash their hands and mouths." Of the morals of the people and the administration of justice the picture is equally pleasing. "With respect to the ordinary people, although they are naturally light-minded, yet they are upright and honourable. In money matters they are without craft, and in administering justice they are considerate. They dread the retribution of another state of existence, and make light of the things of the present world. They are not deceitful or treacherous in their conduct and are faithful to their oaths and promises. In their rules of government there is remarkable rectitude, while in their behaviour there is much gentleness and sweetness. With respect to criminals

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and rebels, these are few in number, and only occasionally troublesome."

"The administration," he tells us, "is mild, and the executive simple. The crown lands are divided into four parts. The first is for carrying out affairs of state. The second, for paying the ministers and officers of the crown; the third, for rewarding men of genius; the fourth, for giving alms to religious communities. In this way, the taxes on the people are light, and the services required of them are moderate. Every one keeps his worldly goods in peace, and all till the soil for their subsistence. Those who cultivate the royal estates pay a sixth part of the produce as tribute. The merchants who engage in commerce travel to and fro in pursuit of their calling. Rivers and toll-bars are opened for travellers on payment of a small sum. When the public works require it, labour is exacted but paid for. The payment is in strict proportion to the work done."

But most interesting of all is the description of the Buddhist university of Nalanda, for here we see a life-like picture of the Indian university thirteen hundred years ago.

"The whole establishment is surrounded by a brick wall. One gate opens into the great college, from which are separated eight other

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halls, standing in the centre of the quadrangle. The richly-carved towers and fairy-like minarets cluster like pointed hill-tops ; the upper storeys and observatories are lost in the morning mists. From the windows one sees the wind wreathing the clouds into various shapes, and from the soaring eaves one may observe the conjunction of the planets. Down below, the deep, transparent ponds bear on their surfaces the blue lotus, mingled with Kanaka flowers, of a deep red colour ; at intervals the Amra groves throw a grateful shade over everything. All the outside courts, in which are the priests' chambers, are of four stages. The stages have carved and coloured eaves, pillars and balustrades, and the tiled roof reflects the light in a thousand shades." The lecture rooms were about one hundred in number, and often the number of residents amounted to ten thousand. Yet the students were earnest and grave, and breaches of the rules were practically unknown. As in medieval monasteries in England, the necessities of life—rice, butter, and milk—were supplied by neighbouring villages. Discipline was strict. "The pursuit of pleasure belongs to the worldly life, the pursuit of knowledge to the religious life. To return to a secular career after taking up religion is considered disgraceful. For breaking

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the rules of the community the transgressor is publicly rebuked ; for a slight fault he is condemned to enforced silence ; for a graver fault he is expelled. Those who are thus expelled for life wander about the roads finding no place of refuge ; sometimes they resume their former occupation."

The course, which included grammar, medicine, logic and psychology, often went on from the pupil's seventh to his thirtieth year. "Then their character is formed and their knowledge is ripe." This is how examinations were held and degrees conferred:—

"When a man's renown has reached a high distinction, he convokes an assembly for discussion. He judges of the talent or otherwise of those who take part in it, and if one of the assembly distinguishes himself by refined language, subtle investigation, deep penetration and severe logic, he is mounted on an elephant covered with precious ornaments, and conducted by a retinue of admirers to the gate of the monastery. If, on the contrary, one of the members breaks down in his argument, or uses inelegant phrases, or violates a rule in logic, they daub him with mud and cast him into a ditch."

Hiuen Tsiang returned to his own country in 646 A. D. loaded with relics, images and price-

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less manuscripts. On his return he set to work to translate the latter into Chinese. He had reached the age of 65, and had finished seventy-four works in thirteen hundred chapters, besides many copies of *sutras* and drawings, when an old malady, the result of his privations in the mountains, attacked him. And so, on the thirteenth day of the tenth month of the year 664 A. D. the brave old scholar set out on his last journey, earnestly praying to be born again in the paradise of the Lord Maitreya. And there, we may hope, he sojourns in the Great Peace, waiting until, in the fullness of time, he will return once more to preach the Law of Piety to men on earth.

CHAPTER III

THE TRAVELLER OF ISLAM "

(IBN BATUTA)

I often think that one of the most wonderful things in history is the rise of Mohammedanism. When the Prophet fled from Mecca to Medina in 622 A. D., he had hardly a friend or a follower in the world. When he died, ten years later, he had laid the foundations of a mighty world-religion, which spread like wild-fire over Asia. It drove the old Byzantines out of Asia Minor, and soon it was knocking at the gates of Constantinople. It swamped the Sassanians in Persia and set up a splendid kingdom whose capital was at Baghdad. It spread all over China, throughout the vast Mongal Empire, and crossed the Hindu Kush into the plains of Hindustan. In Europe also it prevailed mightily. Sicily was half Mohammedan and the Caliphate of Cordova ruled for many centuries in Spain. In north and east Africa and in the Nile Valley, the religion of the Prophet was also supreme.

Nor must we forget our great debt to Mohammedanism. For a time, the Arabs were

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the most cultured people in the world. The world's two most beautiful buildings, the Taj Mahal at Agra and the Alhambra in Spain, are Mohammedan. Everyone has heard of the splendours of the court of the great Haroun Al Rashid at Baghdad. And it was from Mohammedans that the Europeans of the Middle Ages got their medicine, their mathematics, and their philosophy.

One of our chief sources for the study of medieval Mohammedanism is the life and travels of an adventurer named Ibn Batuta, and his story is so interesting that I am going to try and tell it to you now. A very remarkable feature of Mohammedanism is its teaching of universal brotherhood, and this was of great practical value to a traveller. Wherever Ibn Batuta went, from central Africa to northern China, from Russia to India, he was welcomed as a brother. Ibn Batuta started out from his home in northern Africa in 1325 A. D. His original intention was to perform the Haj pilgrimage to Mecca, but on the way he visited Palestine, and on his return he went to Persia, where he travelled to Ispahan and Baghdad. One of the places which he describes is the tomb of the martyr Ali, where he witnessed a curious thing. Many sick people were brought there and laid

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on the martyr's tomb. There they remained, praying and reciting the Koran, and then, on a certain night, known as the "Night of Revival", those who had faith sprang up, quite cured!

Ibn Batuta tells us many other stories which illustrate the respect paid to religion among the Khans with whom he stayed. A certain Khan sent word to the Imam to delay the service at the mosque till he arrived. The Imam bade the messenger return and ask the Khan whether prayers were ordered by God or by him, and commanded the Muezzin to summon the faithful without delay. After the second prostration, the Khan arrived, and standing meekly in the doorway, joined in the prayers like any ordinary man. After the service, he went to the plucky Imam, and grasping him by the hand, begged his pardon. At another mosque, a whip hung at the door. All who did not attend were beaten and fined, and the money went to the upkeep of the mosque!

After he returned home, Ibn Batuta determined to go again on the Haj pilgrimage. This time he made a longer journey, for he went to Aden, and from Aden down the east coast of Africa. He tells us about the water-tanks at Aden, which some of you may visit some day, and about the commercial properties of the

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cocoanut. From Zanzibar in Africa, he went across the Indian Ocean to the Persian Gulf, where he visited the pearl-fisheries, and then went right across the Arabian desert in order to make the Haj pilgrimage for the third time. Very soon afterwards we find him in the Levant, and then crossing the Black Sea to visit the great Mongol Chief, Uzbek Khan, who ruled the "Golden Horde", as they were called,—the Tartars from central Asia who had settled on the banks of the river Volga. You will hear more about these Tartars when you come to read about Marco Polo the Venetian. When Ibn Batuta was in central Russia, he was amazed at the long hours of daylight which these northern countries enjoy in the summer. He tells us that during the month of Ramazan, the sun scarcely seemed to set at all: there was no time to finish the sunset prayers before midnight, and he found it almost harder to say the midnight prayers before dawn. Had Ibn Batuta stayed for the winter, he would have found plenty of time to complete his devotions, I imagine! While Ibn Batuta was in Russia, he was asked to escort a Greek princess to her father's home in Constantinople, and this gave him a chance of visiting the most famous city in eastern Europe, the capital of the Byzantine Em-

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perors. He tells us that when he passed the gates, the sentries scowled and muttered, "Saracen! Saracen!" under their breath, but the Emperor received him very kindly. Ibn Batuta tells us much that is interesting about this wonderful old city, which was the meeting place of the traders of east and west. Here the Venetians and Genoese had their trading houses: and here came the caravans from India and central Asia to sell them silks and spices and precious stones. A little more than a hundred years afterwards, this city, though Ibn Batuta did not realize that it was likely to happen, was captured by the Turks after a long siege and terrible fighting.

It was now that Ibn Batuta got a chance for which he had long tried in vain, and that was a visit to India. A caravan was going to that country and the merchants offered to take him with them. They had a most terrible journey through the passes of the Hindu Kush, or "Hindu Slaying" Mountains, which, our traveller informs us, were so-called because of the hundreds of thousands of poor Hindu captives who perished there, after the cruel raids of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni and others like him. Some day you may read a very noble poem by Matthew Arnold, entitled *Sohrab and Rustum*. There the poet pictures the adventures of "a

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troop of pedlars from Cabool", who are crossing the Hindu Kush, and he describes the pass, in very much the same way as Ibn Batuta does, as

That vast sky-neighbouring mountain of milk snow ;
Winding so high, that, as they mount, they pass
Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,
Chok'd by the air, and scarce can they themselves
Slake their parch'd throats, with sugar'd mulberries—
In single file they move, and stop their breath,
For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging snows.

When Ibn Batuta arrived near Delhi, he found the Sultan Muhammad Tughlak reigning there, and he has left us a most interesting and detailed account of this king, who was a very brilliant and very pious man but at the same time a very harsh and very arbitrary ruler. He took a very great fancy to Ibn Batuta, and made him a judge, with a salary of one thousand rupees a month. Ibn Batuta entered Delhi at the Sultan's side, riding upon a horse from the royal stables, the bridle encrusted with jewels. Behind were the state elephants, carrying standards and umbrellas stiff with gold, and on them were catapults, which discharged showers of gold and silver coin among the crowd. Here is Ibn Batuta's picture of the Sultan :—

“Muhammad above all men delights in giving presents and shedding blood. At his door is

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seen always some pauper on the way to wealth or the corpse of some poor wretch who has been executed. Stories are rife among the people of his generosity and courage, and of his cruelty and severity. Yet he is the most humble of men and one who shows the greatest equity; the rites of religion are observed at his court; he is most strict about prayer and the punishment of those who neglect it. But his chief characteristic is his generosity. Countries at a great distance from India, like Yemen, Khorasan and Persia, are full of anecdotes about him, and their inhabitants know him well: and they are not ignorant of his beneficence towards foreigners, whom he prefers to Indians and favours and honours greatly. He will not have them called foreigners, for he thinks that the name must wound the heart and trouble the mind.

“ One of the nobles of India alleged that the Sultan had executed his brother without just cause, and cited him to appear before the Kazi. The Sultan went on foot to the court, without arms, saluted, made obeisance, and stood before the Kazi, whom he had notified beforehand not to rise at his entry or budge from his seat. The judge gave his decision that the sovereign was bound to satisfy the plaintiff for the blood of his brother: and the decision was duly obeyed.

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“The Sultan is severe upon such as omit the congregational prayers, and chastises them heavily. For this sin he executed in one day nine people, one of whom was a singer. He sent spies into the markets to punish those who were found there during prayer times, and even the men who held the horses of the servants at the gate of the Hall of Audience, if they missed prayers. He compelled the people to master the ordinances for ablutions and prayers, and the principles of Islam. They were examined on these matters, and if ignorant they were punished. The folk studied these things at court and in the markets, and wrote them out. The Sultan is rigorous in the observance of the canonical law. He abolished in 1340-1 the dues which weighed heavily on commerce, and limited taxation to the legal alms and the tenth. Every Monday and Thursday he would sit in person, with assessors, to investigate acts of oppression. No one was hindered from bringing his plea before the king. When there was such a famine in India that a maund of corn cost six dinars he ordered six months’ food to be distributed to all the inhabitants of Delhi from the royal stores. Each person, great or small, free or slave, was to have a pound and a half a day.

“For one thing the Emperor is greatly blamed,

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and that is his treatment of the inhabitants of Delhi. He decided to ruin Delhi. So he purchased all the houses and inns from the inhabitants, paid them the price, and ordered them to remove to Daulatabad. At first they were unwilling to obey, but the crier of the monarch proclaimed that no one must be found in Delhi after three days. The greater part of the people obeyed him, but some hid themselves in houses. The Sultan ordered a vigorous search to be made, and his slaves found two men in the streets; the one was paralyzed and the other was blind. They were brought before the Sultan, who ordered one to be shot away from a catapult and the other to be dragged there, a journey of forty days. The poor wretch fell to pieces on the way, and only one leg arrived. The inhabitants abandoned their belongings and the city was a desert. That evening, it is said, the Sultan mounted his roof, and seeing neither light, nor smoke, nor fire in all that great city, exclaimed, 'Now is my soul at rest, and my heart appeased!'"

Ibn Batuta was sent on a mission to China, but his ship was wrecked, so he went instead to the Maldivé Islands, where he stopped for some years, and was very happy. After this he went to Ceylon, where he was one of the first travellers of whom we know to climb the

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mountain called Adam's Peak, which is ascended by thousands of pilgrims every year. At the summit is a mark which resembles a gigantic footstep: the Buddhists claim that it is the footprint of the Lord Buddha, and the Mohamedans, that it is the footprint of Adam! From Ceylon, Ibn Batuta finally *did* visit China, and on his way home, he touched at south India. During this journey, he and his companions were dreadfully scared by an apparition in the sky, which they took to be that monstrous bird the Rukh or Roc, which, you may remember, carried off Sinbad the Sailor. But, personally, I rather suspect it was only what is known as a mirage!

You would have thought that on his return home, Ibn Batuta would have had enough of travelling. But no, he went very soon afterwards on a long journey of exploration across the Sahara desert to Timbuctoo, where he discovered the river Niger, though, as a matter of fact, he mistook it for the Nile. Evidently his adventures did him no harm, for he lived for many years afterwards. The scribe who wrote an account of his travels says, "No one can fail to perceive that this Shaikh is the Traveller of our Age: it would be no exaggeration to call him the Traveller of Islam." I think we should all heartily agree with this!

CHAPTER IV

THE ADVENTURES OF MARCO POLO

I expect that all of you have heard of the fair city of Venice, the Queen of the Adriatic, with its wonderful cathedral standing in the Square of Saint Mark, its glorious ducal palace, and the innumerable canals serving in the place of streets, with picturesque gondolas darting hither and thither on their placid, blue and silent waters. In the Middle Ages, Venice was one of the most powerful and wealthy cities in Europe. In those days, before the Cape route to India was opened, all the trade of the east came to Venice from the ports on the coast of Asia Minor, where she had her factories and trading-stations.

One day, in the winter of the year 1295, the people of Venice were amused to see three men, in old, patched, outlandish clothes, going up to the house of the Polo family. Their faces were worn and weatherbeaten, they had long, unkempt beards, and they looked like Tartars from central Asia, or some such outlandish place. They announced that they were Nicolo and Maffeo Polo, and Nicolo's son Marco, lately re-

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turned from Asia! At first the servants were inclined to drive them away as impostors, for had not the three Polos disappeared over a quarter of a century ago? And young Marco, the handsome boy of fifteen, who went off so joyously with his father and uncle on that distant summer morning—surely, he could not be this silent, bearded, middle-aged man? Besides, everyone had made up his mind that they had all perished long since! The travellers smiled and said nothing. But that night, they bade their kinsfolk and friends to a great feast. And when the feast was over, and the servants had retired, Marco brought in the old, shabby clothes which had caused so much derision, and began to open the seams. Imagine the surprise of the guests, when out of the lining began to fall jewels innumerable—flashing gems of every size and colour—huge diamonds from India, sapphires from Ceylon, Burmese rubies and lustrous pearls from the Persian Gulf! Now, at last, people began to believe their story, and it was indeed a wonderful and almost incredible one.

About 1260, Nicolo and Maffeo had gone to Constantinople, where Venice had a trading-factory, for purposes of commerce. Next year, they went on to southern Russia on a similar errand. Now in order to understand their sub-

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sequent adventures, you must know something about those wonderful people, the Mongols or Tartars, who were the ruling nation in the east at that time. Shortly before the birth of the Polos, there had arisen in central Asia a most remarkable leader, who had united under one banner all the wandering tribes of central Asia. He called himself Jenghiz Khan. He raised an army of 700,000 men, and his great grandson, Kublai Khan, found himself master of the greatest empire the world has ever seen. His capital was at Pekin, and he reigned over China, Korea, Mongolia and Siberia, Turkestan and Tibet. Then he sent his younger brother Hūlagu, who overthrew the Abbassid Caliph of Baghdad and annexed Mesopotamia and Persia. Fortunately, he did not dream of crossing the Himalayas and taking India, though some centuries after, his descendant Babar did so: for you must not forget that the Moghul dynasty of Delhi traced its descent with pride from Jenghiz Khan. Meanwhile, another band of Tartars, known as the Golden Horde, had overrun Russia: it is fortunate that they stopped there, for the medieval armies could not have prevented them from blotting out European civilization altogether, and advancing to the Atlantic seaboard.

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But you must not think of these Mongolians as brutal or uncivilized. On the contrary, they were cultured and hospitable, courteous to strangers, and anxious to get into touch with western ideas. Hence we are not surprised to hear that the Polos pushed on, without any opposition, to Bokhara, an important city for trade and commerce in central Asia. At Bokhara, the Polos met certain envoys whom the Emperor Kublai Khan had sent to his brother Hulagu. These envoys told the brothers about the glorious capital of Pekin, (or Cambalu, as they called it) its beauty and riches and vast extent. Now the Polos were true Venetians, adventurous, curious, and anxious to learn all they could about new countries and new trading facilities. And so it did not take very long for the envoys to persuade the Polos to return with them, and they were thus the first European travellers in history to reach China.

The party found Kublai Khan staying at his beautiful summer palace at Shangtu, which perhaps some of you will remember, because it is referred to as Xanadu in a famous poem of the poet Coleridge, which begins

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan

A stately pleasure-dome decree.

The Emperor was delighted to see the strangers,

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the first people from the west whom he had ever met, and plied them with endless questions about the Franks, their customs, laws, administration and armies. But he was most of all anxious to hear about the Pope and the Christian religion, for, like his descendant Akbar, he was keenly interested in that subject. Finally, he was so impressed with what he was told, that he decided to send the brothers back to Rome on an embassy to the Pope, in order to take him a letter, asking him to send to Cathay one hundred missionaries, intelligent men, acquainted with the Seven Arts, and able to prove the truths of Christianity by argument. If they did this, Kublai Khan promised that he and all his subjects would become Christians. Then the Emperor gave the Polos a golden tablet to serve as a passport; and wherever they shewed the "Tablet of Authority", they were supplied with horses, food and an escort. After long and arduous travelling, and often delayed by snow in the mountain passes and by rivers swollen with rain, they reached Acre, and thence took ship for Venice. There they found that Nicolo's wife was dead, but she had left behind a son named Marco, a gallant lad of fifteen, eager for any adventure. But, unfortunately, the letter to the Pope could not be presented, for the old

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Pope too was dead, and it was two years before the new one was elected. After two years, a great friend of the Polos, named Archdeacon Tedaldo of Acre, was chosen, and the Polos, accompanied by Marco, set out to see him. The new Pope was delighted at the letter, but he could not spare one hundred missionaries. He sent, however, two learned Dominican monks.

And now, it being the year 1271, the three Polos and the two monks set out on their return journey to the court of Kublai Khan; but I am ashamed to say that very soon, when they came to a part of the country where some fierce fighting was going on, the monks became alarmed and went back home! The rest of the party proceeded leisurely on to Baghdad, and then down the river Tigris to Ormuz at the head of the Persian Gulf, meaning to travel to China by sea; but not finding any ships going that way, they retraced their steps, and eventually reached Balkh, a very ancient city on the river Oxus. Then, following the Oxus, they arrived on the plateau known as the Pamirs. In this lovely climate and charming country, the oriental Switzerland, they rested for some time, recovering from the fatigues of their long journey. This country was never again visited by European travellers until 1838. After this,

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they crossed the terrible Gobi desert, where, you may remember, the old Chinese traveller Huien Tsiang nearly lost his life, while going in the opposite direction. They struggled across this, and entered China; and when Kublai Khan heard of their coming, he sent messengers a forty days' journey to meet them. At last they reached Shangtu, after travelling for three and a half years. The whole court welcomed them with great joy, and Kublai Khan was most of all pleased with young Marco. Marco set to work to learn the language of the country, and so clever and discreet was he that the Emperor sent him on a long and important tour of exploration, which took him to Tibet, Yunnan and to northern Burma. Marco Polo had often noticed the eagerness of Kublai Khan to hear about new lands, and his impatience at the dull, stupid reports of so many of his Commissioners. So he started to keep a detailed diary of his journeys, and these so pleased the Emperor that he again sent him on more missions of the same kind, once to Champa, in French Cochin China, and at other times to Java, Ceylon and the coasts of India. Marco Polo has left us very interesting accounts of Buddhism in Ceylon, and of the customs and habits of the people of Malabar and the other countries which he visited.

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Meanwhile, Marco's uncles were impatient to return home. They had arrived in 1275, and it was now 1290. But Kublai Khan was very unwilling to part with his guests, and it is doubtful whether they would have succeeded in getting away, but for a fortunate accident. Arghun, the Khan of Persia, and Kublai's great-nephew, had lost his wife. He had sworn never to marry anyone except a Mongolian, and he had sent envoys to Kublai Khan's court to fetch back a new bride. Kublai Khan's choice fell upon a very beautiful little princess named Kukachim, but the question now arose, how was she to be sent on the long, terrible, journey from Peking to Tabriz? The Polos suggested that she should go by sea, and that they should escort her. Kublai Khan very reluctantly agreed. Loading his friends with presents for his brother monarchs in Europe (including one for the King of England!) he sent them off from the port of Zaitun early in 1292. The voyage was unfortunately very unlucky, and they were delayed for many weary months in Sumatra and south India. It was nearly three years before Tabriz was reached, and the poor little princess wept bitterly at parting with her kind guardians.

I have told you about the strange welcome which our travellers received on their return to

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Venice. But the story of how Marco Polo came to write his book is even stranger! A war had broken out between the Venetians and their jealous rivals, the people of the city-state of Genoa, and when the Venetian fleet put out to sea, Marco Polo was appointed commander of a galley of 250 men. The rival fleets met in the Bay of Curtzola, not far from Lissa, where the Italians fought another famous battle in modern times, and to the surprise of everyone, the haughty and over-confident Venetians were completely defeated. Marco Polo was carried off, with many others, a prisoner to Genoa. And while he was in prison, he met a fellow-captive named Rusticiano of Pisa. Now when Marco had related his adventures to his friends in Venice, the witty Venetians had laughed at his "traveller's tales", and had nicknamed him *Marco Milioni*, "Marco of the Millions", because of the stories he used to tell about the incredible vastness of Kublai Khan's empire. This had discouraged Marco from ever putting them on paper, and they might easily have been lost to the world. But in Messer Rusticiano, Marco Polo found a more sympathetic listener, and in order to beguile the weary hours in the Genoese dungeon, he poured out to his companion the story of his travels. Messer

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Rusticiano was an author by profession, and it occurred to him to put down in writing what Marco had told him, though, alas, he thought it necessary to keep back much of his adventures because people would be incredulous about them!

Next year, peace was declared, and Marco Polo was allowed to return to his home in Venice. He lived until 1324, when he passed away at the ripe old age of seventy, but I am afraid that, until modern times, very few people believed one half of the stories he used to tell! Now we know that he was a most accurate observer, and that everything which learned men discover to-day tends to prove the truth of what he narrates.

Of all the travellers in the history of the world, I think I should put Marco Polo second. The first and greatest is, of course, Christopher Columbus, whose discoveries changed the course of civilization. But it was Marco Polo who first explored the continent of Asia, the Persian deserts, and the almost inaccessible Pamirs of central Asia. He was the first European to visit the court of the mightiest emperor in the world, the ruler of Asia, whose armies all but swallowed up Christendom and drove the Europeans into the Atlantic. He was the first,

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since the old Chinese pilgrims, to cross the Gobi desert, and to give Europe an account of China, with its Great Wall, its historic capital of Peking, its teeming population and inexhaustible riches. He was the first to tell the world of Japan, of Burma with its golden pagodas, of the Indian Archipelago and the Spice Islands, of Ceylon, with Adam's Peak and the relics of the Buddha, and of southern India and the Brahmins. Nor does he stop there. From him we learn much also of Africa. Madagascar and Socotra, Zanzibar and Abyssinia, the home of the legendary Prester John, all figure in these enchanting pages. As Messer Rusticiano quaintly remarks: "Let me tell you that since Our Lord God did mould with His hands our first father Adam, even until this day, never hath there been Christian or Pagan or Tartar or Indian or any man of any nation, who in his own person hath had so much knowledge and experience of the divers parts of the world and its wonders as hath had this Messer Marco!" But I sometimes think that we owe an even deeper debt to Marco Polo than he was ever aware of: for it was Marco Polo whose example inspired Christopher Columbus, of whom I am very soon going to tell you.

CHAPTER V

THE VOYAGE OF VASCO DA GAMA TO INDIA

I want you for a moment to suppose that you were living somewhere in western Europe about five hundred years ago. Look at a map of the world, and try to trace out the possible routes by which you could, if you so desired, journey to India. First and foremost, there was the shortest and most direct one, through the Mediterranean Sea, something like the way that we go now, except that, there being no Suez Canal in those days, people generally travelled overland from some Levantine port to the Tigris or Euphrates and then went downstream to the Persian Gulf. That was the way that goods travelled in the Middle Ages to and from places like Venice: but it was always a long, dangerous and difficult journey, where the caravans were held up by snowy passes and flooded rivers, and were liable to be plundered by savage tribesmen. Besides, in 1453, a great disaster overtook eastern Europe. The Turks captured Constantinople, the capital of the East, and the Turks of those days were very fanatical and intolerant, and unlike the Arabs, they did not like the Europeans to travel through their

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country. So the European traders had to seek another way for their trade. They preferred a sea-route, because it is far easier to carry goods by water than by land. But which was the best way? There were no good maps of Asia and Africa, and the very existence of America was unknown. So heroic and adventurous sailors set out to discover things for themselves. One set of men started to find out whether there was a road to India round the continent of Africa. Others (and these were chiefly the English and Dutch) tried to pierce a path, some to the east and others to the west, through the eternal ice and snows of the Arctic Circle, and though most of them perished in the attempt, they made many valuable discoveries. Another, the famous Christopher Columbus, thought of a fourth plan, namely, to sail due west from Spain. He imagined that by this means he would arrive at the coast of Japan,—instead of which, he discovered nothing less than the huge continent of America barring the way, for the Panama Canal was not made at that time! And, lastly, a brave Portuguese sailor named Magellan conceived the idea of sailing down the coast of South America and round Cape Horn, just as Vasco da Gama sailed down the coast of Africa and round the Cape of Good Hope. But this was too

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long and perilous a voyage to be of any real use
commercially.

But it is of the Cape of Good Hope route that I want to speak now. The Portuguese were a brave, hardy race of soldiers and seamen. They had delivered their country from its Moorish rulers. Their knights had fought in the Crusades, and their sailors were accustomed to buffet with the huge waves of the Atlantic Ocean for a living. And so it is not altogether surprising that to Portugal belongs the honour of discovering the way to India. But the discovery was not made at a single effort. Long years passed, while the Portuguese sailors felt their way, step by step, down the African coast. The person who was the heart and soul of the enterprise was a prince of the Royal House of Portugal, called, on account of his great undertaking, Prince Henry the Navigator. He had the blood of two great seafaring nations in his veins, for his mother was the daughter of John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster. When Prince Henry died in 1460, the work was still carried on. The Portuguese ships got further and further each successive year, till at last one of them anchored off the mouth of the Congo River. And then a captain named Bartholemew Dias came back

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with a strange story. After being carried southward for many days by a great gale, he made for land, and when he reached it, behold, *the land ran northwards!* He had unconsciously, during the storm, rounded the Cape! Full of his great news, Dias hastened back to Lisbon. The Cape he named the Cape of Storms, but the King of Portugal rechristened it by a more auspicious title, the Cape of Good Hope.

And now the gate to India had been found. The man to open it was also forthcoming. His name was Vasco da Gama, a youngish man (he was only thirty-six) and unmarried. But he had been bred on the Atlantic coast, where nothing but barren sands and gaunt cliffs had forced his ancestors for many generations to wrest a precarious living from the ocean. His portraits show him to be of great size, with a flowing beard and piercing eyes. A genial man, he was loved by his sailors, though he was a stern disciplinarian. One of his chief merits was that he promoted men for merit and not for birth, preferring "a low man who had won honour with his right arm". Courage, pride, ambition, and a bulldog tenacity of purpose were the leading characteristics of this great seaman.

Early in 1497, Vasco da Gama was granted

THE VOYAGE OF VASCO DA GAMA TO INDIA
an interview with King Manoel, who presented him with a banner emblazoned with the cross of the Order of Christ. Then he went to take command of his fleet. This consisted of two ships, the *Saint Raphael* and the *Saint Gabriel*, each of little more than 100 tons burthen, a caravel of 50 tons, and a storeship of 200 tons. With these tiny cockleshells he and his men were to set out on the longest voyage yet undertaken! It is scarcely surprising that it was difficult to find sailors to man the ships, though only 170 men were required in all, and convicts had to be taken out of the jails in order to make up the complement. Then Vasco da Gama spent some time in training his men, not only in seamanship, but in carpentry, rope-twisting and other useful arts. He also went about collecting maps, astronomical instruments, and every kind of information available. Lastly, he engaged the services of Bartholemew Dias's old helmsman. Vasco da Gama was a prudent man who took no risks.

At length all was ready. If you had been at the mouth of the River Tagus on the 7th of July 1497, you would have seen a splendid and stirring spectacle. The crews, with crowds of friends and spectators, had assembled at the Chapel of Our Lady of Bethlehem, which Henry

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the Navigator had built for sailors, on the seashore. After Mass has been sung, they marched in solemn procession, carrying lighted tapers in their hands and chanting a litany, to the quayside, where all knelt, while the priest blessed them and prayed over them. And now the ropes are cast off, the sails, painted with the cross of the Order of Christ, are hoisted, and the Royal Standard is broken from the Admiral's maintop. The little fleet, amid the cheers, prayers and tears of the spectators, slowly vanishes into the sunset and is lost behind the horizon.

At first all went well. The fleet had a rendezvous at the Canary Islands, took in wood and water, and then made a bold sweep to the southward, far out of sight of land. Day after day, week after week, passed by in this waste of unknown waters. Nothing was seen but strange birds, and stranger beasts, such as seals and sea-lions. Weeks turned to months, when at last the weary crew saw signs of land ahead. Almost crazy with joy, on the 7th of November, or just four months since they started, the crew put into Saint Helen's Bay, about thirty-three leagues to the north of the Cape of Good Hope. Guns were fired, the ships dressed, and all donned their best attire. Vasco da Gama and his men

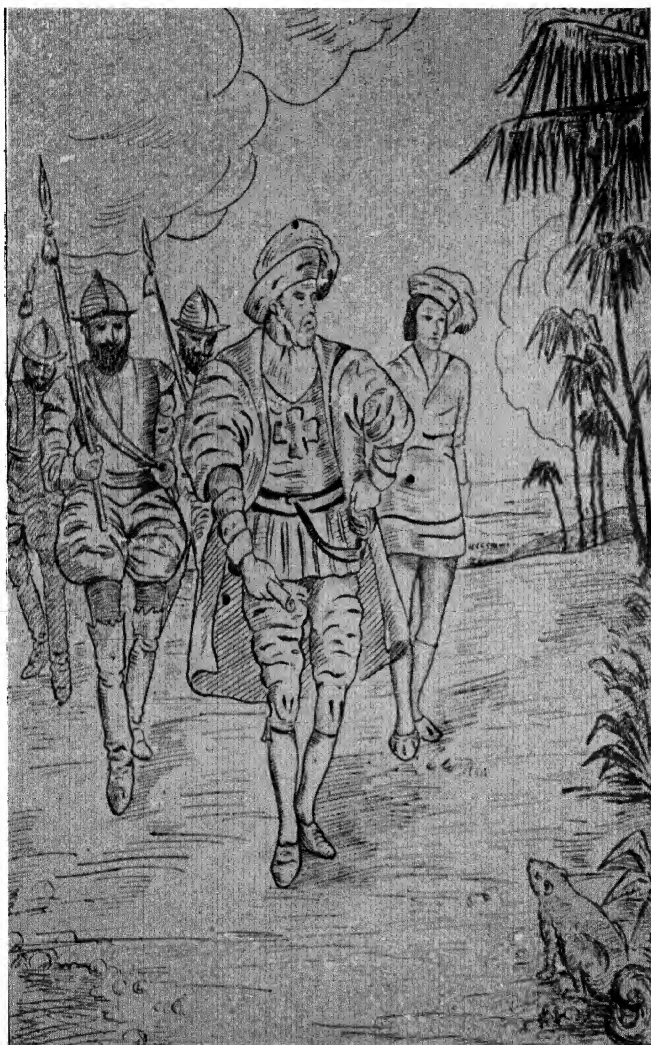
THE VOYAGE OF VASCO DA GAMA TO INDIA
had broken all records: they had sailed 4,500 miles since last sighting land in their frail vessels, and that with charts, compasses, and other instruments of the most primitive character.

Here for the first time the sailors made the acquaintance of the Hottentots, and did some trade with them: fish were caught, fresh stocks of provisions laid in, and the ships were "careened", that is, turned on one side and scraped free of seaweed and other rubbish. After a good rest, they sailed round the much dreaded Cape without incident and landed near Mossel Bay. All along the coast they found the native people very friendly. At one place they bartered red caps and bells for fresh meat; at others they were received with music and dancing and feasting, and crowds came to stare at the white-faced strangers. Great marvels appeared in the sea: whales and walruses with tusks like elephants, and wingless birds (penguins) which brayed like asses. And now they had passed the farthest limit reached by Bartholemew Dias, but they still crept up the east African coast, hoping at length to get sufficiently north to catch the south-west monsoon, which was to carry them across the Indian Ocean. The dark negroes began to give way to the fairer Arabs, haughty people, not inclined to trade, and

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jealous of the new intruders. At the island of Mozambique were actually ships loaded with gold, silver, and precious stones, and there was talk of lands where spices were so plentiful that they could be collected in basketfuls! Other troubles arose: scurvy, a terrible disease which afflicts men who have no fresh food, broke out; Vasco da Gama's ships lost its mainmast in a storm; and worst of all, when the Moors discovered that the Portuguese were Christians, they became hostile and attacked them. Moreover, they refused to give the Portuguese a pilot, for navigating the Indian Ocean. But at Malindi the people were more friendly. The chief of the country came aboard, and was given as a present, a hat and a coat, three basins, and some strings of coral. Over a week the Portuguese stayed and they and their hosts entertained one another with sham-fights, music and feasting. At last a pilot was obtained, and the little fleet, steering due east, set off on the last lap of its journey to India.

This was the end of April, and the monsoon wind had set in. The vessels sailed merrily on for nearly a month, when the look-out called "Land in sight!" And before the weary eyes of the adventurers stretched at last the fabled coast of India! You can imagine the excitement



VASCO DA GAMA LANDS IN INDIA

THE VOYAGE OF VASCO DA GAMA TO INDIA
that ran through their hearts as they saw the long low coast-line, with the surf breaking on the white beach, the houses nestling among the palm-trees, and the stately cloud-capped mountains in the background. They sent ashore one of their number who could speak Arabic, and he met two Mohammedans. "What do you want?" they enquired, staring in amazement at the white faces of these strange arrivals. "Christians and spices!" was the reply. Proceeding, the sailors learned that the city was called Calicut, and that it was the capital of Malabar. Furthermore, the Raja was called the Samorin (perhaps *Samudri Raja*, Lord of the Sea), a tolerant man and kind to strangers. When the sailors came back, they brought a pilot, who took the boats to a safe anchorage. And now Vasco da Gama and his men at last stepped on to Indian soil. This was May 28th, and they had started on July 7th of the previous year.

When they landed they were enchanted with all they saw. Here was an Indian temple, with priests and images, which the rough sailors took to be a Christian shrine! Soon they came before the Samorin himself, who was seated on a throne of velvet under a golden canopy. They were very surprised to learn how well the country was governed, and how the Raja was tolerant to

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Mohammedans and to merchants from distant lands, and humane in the administration of the law. And when the time came for the Portuguese to go, he wrote a letter to the King of Portugal in his own hand. This is what he said:—

“Vasco da Gama, a gentleman of your household, came to my country, whereat I was much pleased. My country is rich in cinnamon, cloves, ginger, pepper, and precious stones. That which I ask of you in exchange is gold, silver, corals, and scarlet cloth.”

Armed with this letter, Vasco da Gama sailed once more for the west. It was a terrible journey. Many men died of scurvy, and the *Saint Raphael* was abandoned at Mozambique. But when the survivors limped wearily into Lisbon in September 1499, they were accorded a triumphal entry. Bells were rung and cannons fired as for a great victory. And a great victory it was,—a victory won by man’s endurance over the forces of nature. Of the four vessels and 170 men who had set out, only two ships and 55 men returned. But they had conquered the East for Portugal. It was truly a heroic achievement.

I cannot now tell you of the return of Vasco da Gama, the conquest of Malabar, the coming

THE VOYAGE OF VASCO DA GAMA TO INDIA
of the great Albuquerque and the capture of
Ormuz, the splendid fortress in the Persian Gulf.
These things you will read in histories when you
are older, and perhaps some day you will visit
Bassein or Goa and see for yourselves the
remnants of this once mighty empire. But I
think you will agree with me that the voyage of
Vasco da Gama was one of the greatest achieve-
ments of human daring in the history of
mankind.

CHAPTER VI

THE STORY OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

At the time when Portugal was full of excitement at the continuous, almost daily advance of explorers along the African coast, a strange figure appeared at the Portuguese court. He was tall and blue-eyed, and his long beard and hair were prematurely grey, though he was yet in middle age. Christopher Columbus, the son of a poor Genoese wool-comber, was very different from the hard-drinking, hard-swearing, rough sea-captains of his age. All his life he had been a dreamer and a mystic. Sometimes, like Saint Joan of Arc, he saw visions and heard heavenly voices. Almost a vegetarian in diet, he preferred water to wine, and wore oftentimes a friar's gown. People regarded him as a monk or student: they laughed at the idea that he could be a sea-captain. But Columbus had, as a matter of fact, spent most of his life at sea.

In one of his letters, he writes:—"From the most tender age, I went to sea, and to this day, I continue to do so. Whosoever devotes himself to this craft must desire to know the secrets of Nature here below. For forty years

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have I thus been engaged, and wherever man has sailed hitherto on the face of the sea, thither have I sailed also. I have been in constant relation with men of learning, whether ecclesiastic or secular, Latins and Greeks, Jews and Moors, and men of many a sect besides. To accomplish this my longing to know the secrets of the world, I found the Lord favourable to my purposes: it is He who hath given me the needful disposition and understanding. He bestowed upon me abundantly the knowledge of Seamanship: and of Astronomy he gave me enough to work withal, and so with Geometry and Arithmetic. In the days of my youth I studied works of all kinds, history, chronicles, philosophy and other arts and to apprehend these, the Lord opened my understanding." In the days of his youth, he had, moreover, made voyages to England and Iceland in the north, and as far as the Guinea Coast in the south. He had sometimes served in privateers, and in 1470, he drifted ashore on a plank at Lisbon, his ship having been sunk in action. While there, he married Felippa, the daughter of an old captain of Prince Henry the Navigator. She brought as her dowry an island in the Madeiras, but the crops were ruined by a plague of rabbits, and the young couple were left penniless. Mean-

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while, Columbus had been deep in his studies. He had read in Marco Polo's voyages the story of Cipangu, or Japan, in the Far East. He knew that Marco Polo had sailed from a Chinese port to India. Moreover, strange stories reached him from the Madeiras. Foreign-looking logs of wood, of unknown species, great canes capable of holding four quarts of water betwixt joint and joint,¹ even strange men with broad faces, "differing in aspect from Christians," had been washed ashore. What did it all mean? Columbus brooded long over the problem. Then it dawned slowly upon his mind that by sailing due west from Portugal, he would come to the coast of Japan or China, and finally to India, by a far shorter and more direct route than by going round Africa.

Full of this new idea, Columbus went to lay it before the King of Portugal. But the king, excited by the recent success of Bartholemew Dias, who had just returned in triumph after circumnavigating the Cape of Good Hope, was all intent upon the Cape route to India. So the idea was treated as a mere dream, and what was worse, a caravel was secretly despatched to the westward to make quite certain! Fortunately

¹ Doubtless giant bamboos!

THE STORY OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

the captain, terrified at these unknown seas, turned back after a few days, and reported that nothing lay ahead of him except vast spaces of open water. Columbus was disgusted at this mean and shabby treatment. He was now in great trouble. His wife Felippa died, leaving him a little boy Diego. Columbus had spent the whole of his fortune on maps and books and was heavily in debt. So he determined to go to Spain to see whether he could get any sympathy for his plans from that country.

It is very sad to read of the early treatment which Columbus received. He could not approach the Spanish Government for some time, because they were engaged in a life-and-death struggle against the Moors. The great nobles received him kindly, but they thought that he was mad, and refused to take his plans seriously. Finally, after many years of patient waiting, Columbus was called to the Royal Court. But even there, he received little encouragement. He had to travel from place to place, wherever the court moved. Meanwhile astronomers, geographers and ecclesiastics, in fact, all the wise men, combined to ridicule the very notion, and prove that it was impossible. At last, his patience was utterly exhausted. Taking his son Diego, he determined to shake the dust of Spain

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from off his feet, and appeal to the King of France. They slipped away, and set out for French soil. One day, footsore and thirsty, they stopped at a wayside monastery, and begged for food and rest. The good Prior kept them for some days, and then Columbus told him the story of his disappointment. Now, as luck would have it, this Prior had a great friend in court, who was no less a person than Queen Isabella's confessor, and he wrote to him, asking him to gain the ear of the Queen. And so, just at the last moment, Columbus was persuaded to return, and negotiations were reopened. At last, with great reluctance, the court agreed to fit out a fleet for what they regarded as a mad venture—at least, a forlorn hope. The fleet provided was a meagre one. It consisted of the *Santa Maria*, a decked ship for 50 men, and two caravels for 30 and 24 men respectively. Even then, Columbus, like Vasco da Gama, was compelled to take galley-slaves and condemned criminals, volunteers not being forthcoming.

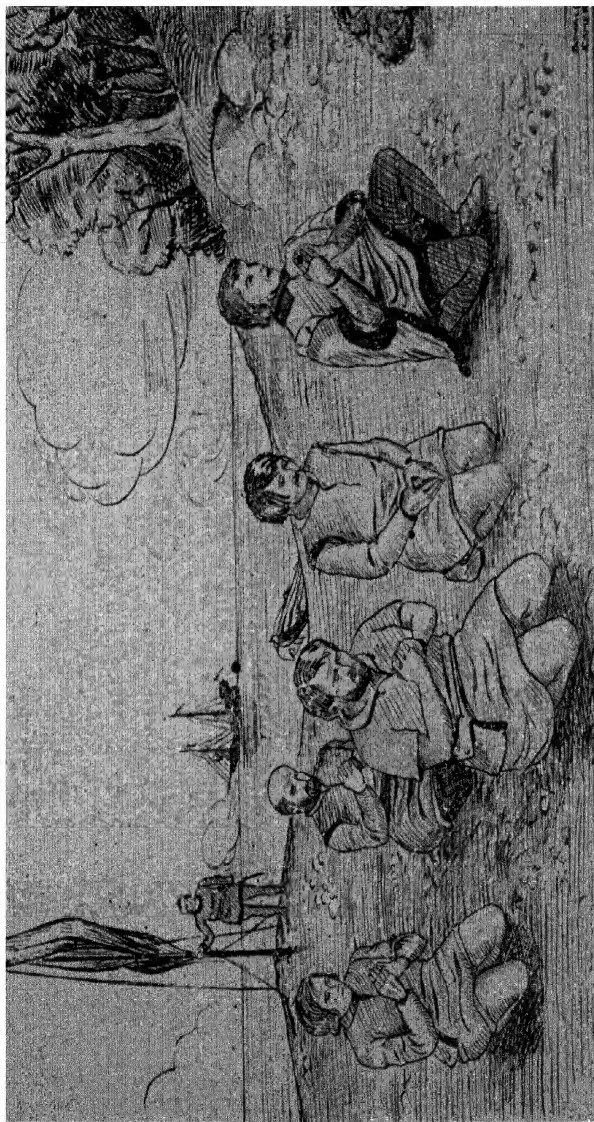
On Friday morning, the 3rd of August 1492, this little fleet of three ships and 120 souls set out on a mission destined to transform the history of the world. They at first steered southward to Teneriffe, where they stopped to make some

THE STORY OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS repairs. Then they turned due west, and sailed right into the sunset. The days became weeks, and the weeks months, and still nothing was seen by the sailors but the vast, endless ocean. They began to murmur and threatened mutiny, but the great faith and invincible will of Columbus restrained them. And now at last, signs that land was ahead began to appear,—sea-weed, a flock of pelicans, driftwood, and “a stake covered with dog-roses”. “With these signs, all of them breathed and were glad.” And then a curious incident occurred which illustrates how trivial occurrences can alter the destinies of nations. A flock of parrots appeared, flying south-west. Martin Pinzon, the helmsman, insisted that they should follow these birds, and Columbus, after long hesitation, agreed to alter course. Had he kept on his original course, he would have reached Florida, and the present United States would have probably received a Catholic Latin population instead of a Protestant English one. As it was, they sailed on to the south-west, until the look-out-man, on the 12th of October 1492, raised the cry “Land ahead”, and the New World was discovered! It was a great day for the explorer: after all the neglect and scorn and weary waiting of twenty years, at length he had achieved the ambition of his

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life, and proved the truth of his theories. The place at which they came ashore proved to be a small, densely wooded island, perhaps Watling Island, one of the Bahama group. Columbus and all his men landed in solemn procession, and, clad in their richest robes, hoisted the Royal Banner of Spain, while he took possession of the new continent in the name of Their Catholic Majesties. Then they one and all "gave thanks to God, kneeling upon the shore, and kissing the ground with tears of joy for the great mercy received", while the mutineers fell weeping at their captain's feet, begging forgiveness for having mistrusted him. Columbus now sailed along the Bahama Islands, until he finally came to the large island of Haiti or San Domingo. Here, unfortunately, the *Santa Maria* was wrecked. But Columbus decided to found a colony of thirty-four Europeans at a place called La Navidad, and having done this, he sailed for Spain, where he arrived in March.

The return of Columbus was a scene of triumph for the heroic explorer. Seated in the presence of Their Majesties Ferdinand and Isabella, he related the stories of his adventures to the whole court. He presented to the Queen the parrots, the gold and the cotton, and other mysterious birds, beasts, plants and fruits, which



CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS
'They all gave thanks to God'

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he had brought for his Royal Mistress. He brought before them all the nine American Indians whom he had induced to accompany him. Honours were showered upon him : he and his brothers became Grandees of Spain ; they were given lands and a coat of arms, and Columbus “rode at the king’s bridle”. The Pope granted to Spain all the discovered lands in the west, as he had given Africa and India to their rivals the Portuguese.

And now Columbus prepared to set out on his second voyage. This time he went forth not as a despised adventurer, but as a famous admiral. His fleet consisted of three large galleons, fourteen caravels, and 1500 men, with all the necessary implements and stores for colonization. Starting in September, Columbus reached La Navidad in two months, and finding that the fort had been burnt down during his absence, he rebuilt it, and started colonization in earnest. Having done this, and leaving his brother Diego in charge, Columbus himself set out westward once more. Cuba, Jamaica and other great islands were discovered, but the exploration wearied Columbus terribly. For thirty nights he had no sleep, steering his vessel in and out of uncharted reefs and shoals, and when he returned to Isabella (for he had named his

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new colony after the Queen of Spain) he was for a long time dangerously ill.

Meanwhile, things were not going well in the newly-conquered territory. The Spaniards were a proud and haughty race, and many of them secretly despised Columbus as a foreigner of common birth. Some of the colonists had treated the Red Indians very badly, and I am sorry to say that they even captured a large number and sent them to Spain as slaves; though immediately on their arrival they were released by the orders of Queen Isabella, who was a noble-minded woman and very indignant at this cruel action. Columbus now heard that there were people in the court intriguing against him. So leaving the colony in charge of his brother Bartholemew, he once more went back to Spain. Here, thanks to the Queen, he was well received: he was given a large tract of land in Hispaniola, and a tenth of the net profits of each voyage for three years: he was offered a dukedom or marquisate: and his two little boys were made Royal Pages.

And now, having settled matters at home, Columbus set out on his third voyage of exploration. This time he discovered the Isle of Trinidad, and sighted, for the first time, the coast of South America. The mighty torrent of

THE STORY OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

water pouring out from the mouth of the Orinoco River, convinced him that behind must lie a vast continent. But meanwhile, things were going badly once more at Hispaniola. A colonist named Roldan had stirred up a revolt, and worse still, the rival faction at court had once more got the upper hand, and had accused Columbus of high-handed conduct, cruelty to the natives, and many other things. King Ferdinand decided to suspend him, and sent out one Francisco de Bobadilla to place him under arrest! Bobadilla on his arrival actually put Columbus in irons and despatched him to Spain for trial. The captain of the ship, struck with compassion for his noble prisoner, wanted to remove the fetters, but Columbus proudly refused. Only the King, he said, by whose orders they had been affixed, should order their removal: he would keep them ever afterwards as "relics and memorials of the reward of his services". Many years afterwards, his son tells us, he saw these fetters hanging in his father's cabinet, and his father asked that when he died, they might be buried with him.

But the arrival of the noble prisoner in his fetters created a great reaction in his favour. The Queen, his constant friend, was moved to tears. The whole country, remembering what

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services he had rendered to Spain, received him with acclamations. His bonds were struck off; his titles and lands were restored; and orders were sent to Hispaniola that Roldan and Bobadilla should come home for trial at once. But they never reached Spain, for a fierce tempest arose, and they and all their crews perished miserably. "I am satisfied it was the hand of God," writes the younger Columbus, "for had they arrived in Spain, they had never been punished as their crimes deserved, but rather been favoured and preferred."

And now, in May 1502, Columbus set out on his fourth and last voyage. This time he came in sight of land off the coast of Honduras, and heard from an aged Red Indian stories of a great continent, rich in gold. This, he thought, must be the land of the Great Khan, mentioned by Marco Polo, and he sailed up the coast, seeking for a place to plant a fresh colony. But his ships were sorely shaken by a violent storm, and once more the mutinous conduct of the sailors frustrated his plans, and he was forced to return to Jamaica. Here he stayed for some time, returning in 1504. Two years later, worn out by his exertions, and disappointed at the partial success of his far-sighted schemes, he passed away.

THE STORY OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

You may, perhaps, wonder why I have included Columbus in this little book of eastern travels. Columbus indeed, never reached the East. He never set foot upon the shores of Cipango, or visited the realms of the Great Khan of Cathay, about which Marco Polo had written. But he imagined he had done so. He was convinced that the islands at which he touched were really a part of India, and it is owing to this mistake that we speak to-day of the "West Indies", and apply the term "Red Indians" to those copper-coloured aboriginals of America, about whom we read so many romantic stories. Again, everyone ought to know all about the strange accident by which, in attempting to find India, Columbus made a discovery which has revolutionized the history of the world. And lastly, Christopher Columbus was one of the noblest, as well as the bravest and greatest, of the world's explorers and travellers. For years, sustained only by his great faith, he struggled against ridicule and neglect, to fulfil the purpose of his life. Then, when he had at last fulfilled the crowning achievement of all his labours, he received fetters and false accusations as his reward. In spite of all this, he struggled

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on, never despairing or losing heart, until he at length prevailed against his detractors. The study of the life of so great, so brave, so patient, and so noble a man must, I think, be full of lessons for all of us to-day.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST ENGLISHMEN IN INDIA

In a former chapter, I told you of the importance of the spice-trade in olden times. England, too, had need of spices. Think of what life was like in those days: there was no tea, no coffee, no tobacco, no potatoes, no sugar—none of those things which have become almost a necessity of daily life to us. In order to make food and drink palatable, spices had to be added, and they were required, moreover, to preserve and pickle the meat which was stored up for consumption during the long winter months. It is true, of course, that the Portuguese had opened the ocean route to India. But that, unfortunately, was of no use to England, for the Portuguese and Spanish were Catholics, and they bore no love to the Protestant English, whose ships were constantly plundering their galleons. And so, as you will see, England had still to depend upon foreign merchants in Amsterdam and other places for its pepper, and these merchants, not unnaturally, kept the price as high as they could. And this teaches us two great lessons. The first is what learned

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men call the "economic factor of history", which means that great historical and national movements are nearly always caused, not by a desire to conquer, but by the necessity of procuring those articles of food or commerce which are required so urgently that it is difficult to exist without them. You must not forget that when the English came to India, they wanted merely the right to trade. They required pepper and other spices for their food; cotton and silk for clothing; indigo to dye their clothes; and such things as pearls, ivory and jewels to sell to rich people. It was only when, in course of time, the English found that India was in such a state of disorder that peaceful trade was no longer possible, and when they were afraid that the French might do so first, that they took over the government of the country.

The second point is the importance of Sea Power. If a country does not possess what is called the "freedom of the seas", that is, if her warships do not keep the seas open for her, she cannot trade with countries overseas, and her people may starve. Before the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, England was in this position. She could not send her merchant-vessels round the Cape of Good Hope to India, for fear of the Spanish and Portuguese cruisers.

THE FIRST ENGLISHMEN IN INDIA

This is a very important lesson. One of the reasons, I think, why India has not been as great as she might have been in the past, is because she has neglected Sea Power, and her sailors were not so skilful or gallant as her soldiers.

Well, in 1582, the English came to the conclusion that the only thing left for them, was to get into touch with India for themselves. If they could not go by sea, they must go overland, in spite of the perils and dangers of the overland journey. So two great London merchants, Sir Edward Osborne, the Lord Mayor of London, and Sir Richard Staper, went to Queen Elizabeth. Elizabeth, as they knew, was always ready to help any enterprise which would benefit her country and she had heard men speak of Akbar, the great and wise Moghul Emperor, who was at that time ruling at Agra. So she promised that, if Sir Edward Osborne sent any one, she would give them a letter of introduction to Akbar. For this purpose, Sir Edward selected John Newbery, a merchant who had already been in the Levant, and knew Arabic. Newbery was to have with him Ralph Fitch, another merchant, William Leedes, a jeweller, and James Storey, a painter. Queen Elizabeth's letter ran as follows :—

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“ELIZABETH by the Grace of God. To the most invincible and most mighty Prince, Lord Zalaluddin AKBAR, King of Cambay. Invincible Emperor,

“The great affection which our subjects have to visit the most distant places of the world, not without good will and intention to introduce the trade of merchandize of all nations whatsoever they can, by which means the mutual and friendly traffic of merchandize may come, is the cause that the bearer of this letter, JOHN NEWBERY, jointly with those that be in his company, with a courteous and honest boldness, do repair to the borders and countries of Your Empire. We doubt not but that Your Imperial Majesty through Your Royal Grace will favourably and friendly accept him. And that you would do it the rather for our sake to make us greatly beholden to Your Majesty, we should more earnestly and with more words require it, if we did think it needful. But by the singular report that is of Your Imperial Majesty’s humanity in these uttermost parts of the world, we are greatly eased of that burden, and therefore we use the fewer and less words: only we request that, because they are our subjects, they may be honestly entreated and received. And that in respect of the hard journey which

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they have undertaken to places so far distant, it would please Your Majesty with some liberty and security of voyage to gratify it, with such privileges as to you shall seem good : which courtesy, if Your Imperial Majesty shall to our subjects at our requests perform, We, according to Our Royal Honour, will recompense the same with as many deserts as we can. And herewith we bid Your Imperial Majesty farewell."

Armed with this letter, the little party set out fearlessly on their long journey to the unknown and distant country of India. As I explained to you already, they could not go by the Cape. They therefore took passages on a little trading vessel, called the *Tiger*, in which they sailed to Tripoli in Syria, journeying from there by caravan for seven days until they reached Aleppo. Many years after, the dramatist Shakespeare seems to refer to this. In the opening scene of *Macbeth*, the Witch says

Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o' the *Tiger*.

They reached Aleppo on May the 1st 1583. From Aleppo, they travelled along the Euphrates, and slowly made their way, partly by water, and partly by caravans, to Baghdad. The heat was now so great, that they had to travel by night, and bit by bit, they pushed on to

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Basra, and from Basra to the great Portuguese port and fortress of Ormuz. Ormuz, the "gateway of the Persian Gulf", was one of the richest places in the whole world, and the "wealth of Ormuz" was a proverb. It was here that the Portuguese collected vast stores of money and goods which they had acquired in the east, and particularly the famous pearls which came from the Bahrein fisheries. The Portuguese were very suspicious of any foreigners who might pass through this gateway, and try to break the monopoly of their Indian trade. In order to lull their suspicions, the Englishmen set up a little shop, and started trading in cloth, glass, knives and other similar goods, hoping to slip away unobserved, whenever they saw an opportunity. But unfortunately, there was also in Ormuz a Venetian named Michael Stropene, and the Venetians were very jealous of the English. So he denounced them to the commander of the fortress, and the commander sent them off to Goa, the capital of Portuguese India, to be dealt with there.

The Englishmen arrived in Goa on November the 29th. I do not think the Goanese authorities quite knew what to do with them. They had done no wrong, and of course Fitch said nothing about his letter to the Emperor ! That, we may

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be sure, he kept very carefully concealed. The English stayed in Goa for over a year. They were very kindly treated, chiefly because they found in the city a noble English Jesuit named Thomas Stevens, a great saint and poet, who was much loved by all. James Storey liked Goa so much that he married a Goanese girl, and decided to stay there ! •He earned enough to live on by painting pictures on the walls of the beautiful Goanese churches. But Newbery was determined to get away, and one day (April the 5th 1585), he and Leedes and Fitch pretended to go out on a picnic into the country, and slipped quietly off without being detected or missed. After some days of travel, they found themselves at Bijapur, and from Bijapur they journeyed to Golconda, Ujjain and finally to Agra.

Newbery and his friends were amazed at the splendour of the great Moghul capital. It must be remembered that London in the days of Queen Elizabeth was a tiny country town with nothing in its whole length or breadth to compare with Akbar's court. The ambassadors from the little, unheard-of island in the west were dumbfounded as they entered the splendid city. They describe it as "very great and populous, many times greater than London, built with stone, having fair and large streets, with a fair river running by it, which

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falleth into the gulf of Bengal. It hath a fair castle and a strong, with a very great ditch". . In the markets, they found "a very great resort of merchants from Persia and out of India, and very much merchandize of silk and cloth and precious stones, both rubies, diamonds and pearls". In the royal parks were 1,000 elephants, 30,000 horses, 1,400 tame deer, "and such store of ounces (leopards), tigers, buffles (buffaloes), cocks and hawks, that is very strange to see." The travellers went from Agra to Fatehpur Sikri, and all along the twenty miles of intervening road found "a market of victuals and other things, as full as though a man were still in a town, and so many people as if a man were in a market". At last they were issued into the Presence, and Newbery delivered his letter. They were astonished to see the Emperor so simply dressed. Akbar only wore "a white cabie or tunic, made like a shirt with strings tied on one side, and a little cloth on his head, coloured oftentimes with red or yellow". Leedes was so pleased with what he saw that he determined to stay behind. Akbar made him his Court Jeweller, giving him a house and five slaves, a horse, and six shillings a day!

The little party was now reduced to two, Newbery and Fitch. Newbery arranged that he would go home overland through Lahore to

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Persia, and thence to Aleppo or Constantinople, charter a ship, and come out to the Bengal coast. Meanwhile, Fitch was to explore Bengal, and wait for him there. Fitch did what he was told. He travelled down the Ganges to its mouth. He took a ship across the Bay of Bengal to Bassein and Pegu. Then he went on to Malacca, and made enquiries about China and Japan and the possibilities of trading there. Finally he returned to Bengal and tried to find Newbery. But Newbery was not there. Somewhere in the mysterious heart of Asia, we know not where or when, he had perished. So in 1589, Fitch set out for England. The journey was a long and tedious one. He went to Ceylon, and from Ceylon to Goa and Ormuz, (where, you may be sure, he did not allow the Portuguese authorities any opportunity to discover that he was the man who had escaped from their clutches five years previously!) and thence to Aleppo once more. He landed in England on April the 29th, 1591. What a world of things had happened since he had set out! Mary Queen of Scots had been beheaded, and the great Spanish Armada had been swept from the seas. And when his relations, who must have long given him up for dead, had ceased to tell *their* news, imagine what a story William Fitch had to relate

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to his audience!' He had been to Baghdad, the famous city of the Caliphs: he had watched the Bahrein pearl fishers at their work, and 'had visited the Portuguese in their eastern capital. He had seen Burma and Ceylon and the Spice Islands, places hardly even known, except in the dimmest of far-off legends, to people of those days. But most of all, I think, he would love to dwell on the moment when he was admitted to the presence of that great and wise Emperor Akbar, ruler of the most marvellous empire in the world, and in the presence of the amirs and generals and princes in their pearls and glittering robes, presented his Mistress's letter. And we, too, 'must not forget William Fitch; for it was he who laid the foundation of the British Empire in India. If you take a map, and mark the course of his journeys, you will, I think, be surprised at the bravery and endurance of a man who could visit so many distant countries, and traverse such vast deserts and wild and unknown lands, in order to find out useful information for the benefit of his fellow-men.

CHAPTER VIII

THE OLD ENGLISH FACTORY AT SURAT

In a previous chapter, I said something about the importance of Sea Power. Before 1588, England was unable to trade with India directly, because the Spanish and Portuguese held the seas. And the difficulties of trade by land were shown by the adventures and hair-breadth escapes of William Fitch and his friends. But with the defeat of the Armada in 1588, the seas were open and all was changed. In 1599, the East India Company was formed, but the first two fleets which were sent out, went, not to India but to the Spice Islands. It was only the third fleet, consisting of the *Hector* under Captain William Hawkins, the *Dragon* under Captain Keeling, and the *Consent* under Captain Middleton, which actually set out for the mainland of India, on March the 8th, 1607. These little boats would astonish you if you saw them, and I doubt whether you would care to make a voyage from Bombay to Karachi even in the largest. But the brave sailors ventured without hesitation, on a voyage of many thousands of miles, without even charts to guide them, to an utterly

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unknown and unexplored coast. The difficulties of the journey are well shown by the fact that it took nearly five months to reach the Cape of Good Hope! By the next March, when they had been a whole year on the way, they had only got as far as Socotra,—for they sailed up the east coast of Africa, rather than go straight across, in order to catch the south-west monsoon. At Socotra they waited until June for a favourable wind, and on August the 28th they arrived at Suvali Road, at the mouth of the Tapti River. This was the harbour for Surat, which lay about fourteen miles up the stream. The reason why Hawkins came to Surat was because this city was, in the Moghul days, the most important port and trading centre on the west coast of India. It was sometimes called the Gate of Mecca, because here the Mohammedan pilgrims embarked for the Haj pilgrimage. In the warehouses of Surat were stored immense quantities of goods; Gujarat is a very rich country, producing great quantities of cotton, rice and indigo, and the Gujaratis were good sailors and skilful traders.

Hawkins was at first well received by the Moghul Governor, and settled down to trade quietly. All went well for some months, when suddenly a Portuguese fleet arrived off the coast.

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Seeing their hated rivals, they attacked and severely damaged the *Hector*, wounding a number of the crew. Worse still, they persuaded the Moghul Governor not to trade with them any more. Hawkins was so angry, that he determined to go up to Agra and see the Emperor Jahangir about it. And so to Agra he went, and the Emperor Jahangir at first received him kindly ; he became very friendly with him, for Hawkins could speak Turkish, which was very like Turki, the old language spoken by the Moghuls in central Asia, and Jahangir was never tired of hearing stories about the Europeans and their customs. For a long time the jovial sailor was a great favourite at the royal court ; he became a great friend of the powerful nobleman Asaf Khan, the brother of the Empress Nur Jahan, and he was called the "English Khan" and allowed a special place at the Hall of Audience. But here, too, the Portuguese began to intrigue against their rivals, until, in the end, Hawkins found that he had lost Jahangir's favour, and he had to return to Surat without having obtained anything definite from the Moghul Government. Fortunately, he arrived at Surat just as another English fleet, under Sir Henry Middleton, hove in sight. Sir Henry Middleton came out in a fine ship,

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named the *Trade's Increase*, of 1,100 tons ; he had under him, two other vessels, the *Peppercorne* and the *Darling*. Their cargo consisted of cloth of various kinds, lead, tin, quicksilver and sword blades. They were to sell this, and to buy cotton, calico, silk, indigo, opium, and spices and drugs of various sorts, especially pepper. But Middleton was unable to accomplish very much, owing to Portuguese opposition, and finally he went on to the Spice Islands, where his beautiful ship, the *Trade's Increase*, was wrecked off the coast of Java and burnt by the natives. Poor Captain Middleton died of vexation ; but Captain Downton of the *Peppercorne* brought home such a rich store of spices, that, in spite of their loss, the voyage paid a huge profit.

But the English were determined not to be foiled. In 1612, they sent Captain Best with the *Dragon* and *Hosiander*, and these two vessels were actually attacked by a Portuguese fleet, and fought a running battle up the coast with them. The two English ships handled the Portuguese so severely, that the latter drew off and went back to Goa as fast as they could. This was the first battle between the English and the Portuguese on the Indian coast, and it so greatly impressed the Moghul authorities with the power of the despised islanders, that

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the Emperor Jahangir sent a *farman* allowing the English to trade at Surat, and when Captain Best sailed away to the Spice Islands, he was allowed to leave behind him a little band of men, about five in number, to carry on trade until he returned. This was the first English settlement in India, and it was of the greatest importance. The English people had at last got a footing at Surat, and the Portuguese were greatly enraged, for they saw that, unless they took some decisive steps, their supremacy in the east was doomed. But I feel sorry for that brave little company of men who were left behind, in a strange and hostile country, with a language and customs which they did not even understand. Their hearts must have sunk, when the last handshake was exchanged, and the *Dragon* slowly disappeared behind the horizon. This was in February 1613, and it was not until October of the following year that the next English fleet hove in sight, and cast anchor in Suvali Road. This consisted of the *New Year's Gift*, of 650 tons, under Captain Downton, with three other smaller vessels—"four ships and four hundred gallant men". The Portuguese at Goa soon got to hear of this, and they determined to prepare an Armada which would turn the hated English out of the east for ever.

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It consisted of six great galleons, of which the flagship, the *All Saints*, of 800 tons, mounted 23 guns, three smaller ships, sixty frigates, and two galleys,—altogether 234 guns, with 2,600 European and 6,000 Indian soldiers and sailors, against Captain Downton's four poor merchantmen, with 400 men, many of them sick with scurvy, and 80 guns. The Portuguese frigates began to appear off the coast in December, and one day, about thirty or forty frigates,¹ supported by three ships, suddenly attacked the *Hope*, as she was lying at anchor in Suvali Road. The attack was made so unexpectedly, that the other English ships had to cut their cables in order to come to the rescue. The Portuguese fought very bravely indeed. They actually boarded the *Hope*, but the attackers were gradually driven back and hurled into the sea. The rest of the fleet then came up, and after a fierce cannonade, drove the enemy off. The Portuguese did not dare to enter Suvali Road again. They tried to destroy the English by sending fire-ships to drift alongside with the tide, but these too were detected and sunk. One day, the English awoke to find their enemy had disappeared. The Portuguese admiral, des-

¹ The "frigate" then was a small fast galley, of light draught.

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pairing of success, had gone back to Goa, and Downton's tiny fleet had won! By now, the Portuguese Empire in the east was beginning to crumble to pieces, and in 1621 an Anglo-Dutch expedition took and destroyed the frowning citadel of Ormuz, which had for so long prevented any foreign ship from trading in the Persian Gulf.

The English had now established themselves firmly at Surat. They had opened factories at Broach, Ahmedabad, Baroda and Cambay, and had sent agents as far as Sind and Lahore. All that was now required was to conclude a regular treaty between the King of England and the Moghul Emperor. For this purpose King James I sent out in 1616 an ambassador named Sir Thomas Roe, who went up from Surat to Agra, and has left us a very interesting account of the Emperor Jahangir's court and of India as he saw it. Here are some extracts from his Diary:—

“January 10 1616. I went to court at 4 in the evening to the Durbar, which is the place where the Moghul sits out daily to entertain strangers, to receive petitions, to give commands, to see and to be seen. To digress a little from my reception and to declare the customs of the court will enlighten the future

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discourse. The King hath no man but eunuchs that come within the lodgings or retiring rooms of his house. His women watch within and guard him with manly weapons. They do justice one upon another for offences. He comes every morning to a window called the *Jharokha* looking into a plain before his gate, and shows himself to the common people. At noon he returns thither and sits some hours to see the fight of elephants and wild beasts ; under him within a rail attend the men of rank ; from whence he retires to sleep among his women. At afternoon he returns to the Durbar before mentioned. At 8 after supper he comes down to the *Ghuzlkhana*, a fair court where in the midst is a throne erected of freestone wherein he sits, but sometimes below in a chair ; to which are none admitted but of great quality, and few of those without leave ; where he discourses of all matters with great affability. There is no business done with him concerning the state, government, disposition of war or peace, but at one of these two last places, where it is publicly propounded and resolved and so registered, which [register] if it were worth the curiosity, might be seen for two shillings, but the common base people know as much as the council, and the news every day is the King's new resolutions

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tossed and censured by every rascal. This course is unchangeable, except sickness or drink prevent it; which must be known, for as all his subjects are slaves, so is he in a kind of reciprocal bondage, for he is tied to observe these hours and customs so precisely that if he were unseen one day, and no sufficient reason rendered, the people would mutiny; two days no reason can excuse but that he must consent to open his doors and be seen by some to satisfy others. On Tuesday at the *Jharokha* he sits in judgment, never refusing the poorest man's complaint, where he hears with patience both parts; and sometimes sees with too much delight in blood the execution done by his elephants.

“At the Durbar I was led right before him at the entrance of an outer rail, where met me two principal noble slaves to conduct me nearer. I had required before my going leave to use the customs of my country,¹ which was freely granted, so that I would perform them punctually. When I entered within the first rail I made an obeisance, entering in the inward rail a second and when I came under the King, a third. The place is a great court, whither resort all

¹ i. e. as regards saluting. Sir Thomas Roe refused to make the deep salaam given by the courtiers.

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sorts of people. The King sits in a great gallery overhead : ambassadors, the great men,, and strangers of quality, within the inmost rail under him, raised from the ground, covered with canopies of velvet and silk, underfoot laid with good carpets : the meaner men representing gentry within the first rail, the people without in a base¹ court, but so that all may see the King.”

Here again, is Sir Thomas Roe’s description of the Royal Camp :—

“ November 2 1616. Returning I viewed the *laskar*, which is one of the wonders of my little experience, that I had seen it finished and set up in four hours, the circuit being little less than twenty English miles, the length some ways three *kos*, comprehending the skirts ; and in the middle, wherein the streets are orderly, and tents joined, are all sorts of shops and distinguished so by rule that every man knows readily where to seek his wants, every man of quality and every trade being limited how far from the King’s tents he shall pitch, what ground he shall use, and on what side, without alteration ; which, as it lies together, may equal almost any town in Europe for greatness. Only a musket shot every way no

¹ Lower.

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man approacheth the *toshakhana*¹ royal, which is now kept so strict that none are admitted but by name, and the time of the Durbar in the evening is omitted and spent in hunting or hawking or on tanks by boats, in which the King takes wonderful delight, and his barques are removed on carts with him."

Sir Thomas Roe stayed with Jahangir until 1618, travelling with the court to Mandu, Ahmedabad and many other places. When he left, the Emperor Jahangir gave him a letter to King James I. This is Roe's translation of it :—

"Letter from the Great Moghul to King James.

"How gracious is your Majesty, whose greatness God preserve. As upon a rose in a garden, so are mine eyes fixed upon you. God maintain your estate, that your Monarchy may prosper and be augmented and that you may obtain all your desires worthy the greatness of your renown; and as your heart is noble and upright so let God give you a glorious reign; Because you strongly defend the law of the Majesty of Jesus, which God make yet more flourishing, for that it was confirmed by miracles. And the same honour which God hath given unto Moses and to Jesus, the same God give unto you.

"The letter of friendship which you wrote unto

¹ Treasury.

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me I have received and have understood all that was contained therein ; and all the presents and rareties which you sent me are delivered' unto me, which I have accepted with much delight, love and great content, and have received them as if the kings my ancestors had sent them to me. And in whatsoever I may give you the like content I have given my command to all my kingdoms, subjects and vassals, as well to the greatest as to the least, and to all my sea ports, that it is my pleasure and I do command that to all the English merchants in all my dominions there be given freedom and residence ; and I have confirmed by my word that no subject of my kingdoms shall be so bold to do any injury or molestation to the said English, and that their goods and merchandize they may sell or traffic with according to their own will and to their own content, and that of all things which they desire in my kingdoms wheresoever they may buy, carry forth and trade freely, for that it is my good will and pleasure that they may so do ; and that all their ships may come and go to my ports wheresoever they choose at their own will. And I have commanded the great lord Asaph Khan that he take this contract and business into his care ; that he may farther give or enlarge in all matters

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belonging to the land or seas, according as I
have given my security and made agreement ;
And whatsoever the said great lord Asaph Khan
shall do shall stand in force as well in any
articles of contract as in all other their desires
or occasions ; and that whatsoever goods shall
come from your kingdom hither unto me of any
kind, or shall go to you from my kingdom, shall
receive no hindrance or impediment, but shall
pass with honour and friendship.

“So God give Your Majesty good health.

“Written in Ahmedabad, the chief city in
Gujarat. August 8th, 1618.”

This was the turning-point for the English at
Surat. Secure now of the Emperor's favour,
they hired a large house as a permanent
factory. At first it was organized very
strictly indeed : it was something like a
college or a monastery. At the head of every-
one was the President. He was a very import-
ant person, for he was not only the chief
of the Surat factory, but also of all the other
factories of the company in the east. Under
him were factors, writers or clerks, and other
traders. The factors all dined together in the
Hall, and every morning they went to prayers
in the factory chapel. The building was a two-
storeyed one : the upper rooms were used as

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living rooms, and the lower ones were godowns and storehouses and offices. Whenever the factors went abroad, they travelled in great state, with flags flying, and trumpeters and an escort of peons or footmen. When they died, they were buried in stately and handsome tombs. The old factory of Surat lasted until 1684, when the headquarters of the East India Company was transferred to Bombay. But if ever you go to the old town of Surat, you may still see the building which was once the old British factory, where the English were twice attacked by Sivaji and his Marathas and twice beat them off; and the graveyard, now deserted, where lie the bodies of Sir George Oxenden, the greatest of the presidents, and the wise and noble-minded Gerald Aungier, and many another stout old English factor, who came out to trade here when the Great Moghul still sat on the Peacock Throne at Delhi. The broad silver Tapti flows swiftly and silently seawards past these ancient ruins; but they are deserving of more than a passing glance; for they are the cradle of the English in India.

CHAPTER IX

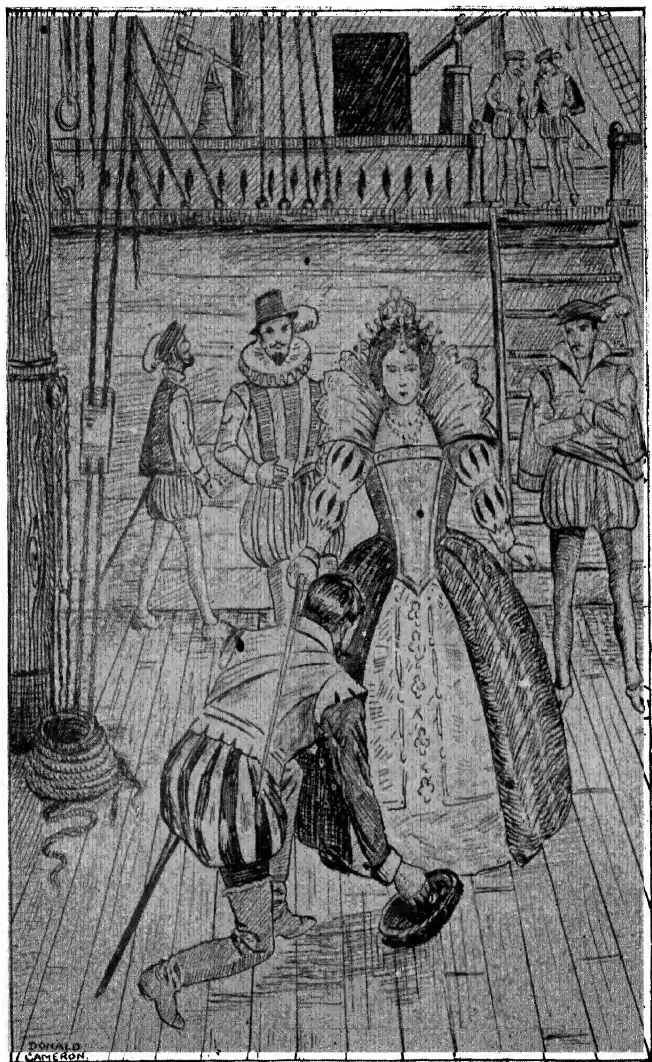
THE QUEST OF THE *GOLDEN HINDE*

If you ever go to England, do not forget to visit Devonshire. It is one of the most beautiful counties in England, and to Englishmen it has a further charm. For it was the men of Devon who built up her overseas empire in the great days of Elizabeth. And to-day I am going to tell you the story of one of the greatest of the Devon boys. His name was Francis Drake.

Francis Drake was born at the old-world town of Tavistock in Devon, somewhere about the year 1540, at the time when bluff King Henry VIII was sitting on the throne. He was not, I fancy, a good boy, and, may be, the old "dominie" in the pleasant half-timbered house, which served for a Grammar School, had many a hard hour, trying to beat the rules of Latin syntax and other dull things into young Francis' curly pate; for, as someone has very justly remarked, nearly all great men have been downright "scallywags" in their boyhood. Now a "scallywag" is defined by the same writer as one who is always breaking rules, that is, rules

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laid down by others : for that is quite a different matter from breaking those which they laid down for themselves. And so young Francis was, more often than not, playing truant, and many a beating, we may be sure, he got from his father, who was a clergyman and a very strict man. But it was worth it. For during those hours, he would go and mix with the crowds which had gathered round some bronzed, scarred old sea-dog, who had returned that day from the Spanish Main, and was remembering (" with advantages", we may be sure, if we know anything at all of the ways of sailormen, more especially when a small boy is listening open-mouthed !) his adventures for the benefit of his audience. Perhaps he would show them a carved walrus-tooth, or a tomahawk, or some such treasure ; or perhaps ' he would tell of the beautiful, palm-covered islands, and the redskins and their ways, and sometimes the talk would drift to other stories that boys love to hear, dark tales of pirates, of the singeing of the King of Spain's beard, and fables of the wonderful city of the Incas, where the very streets were said to be paved with gold. And there would also be stories of Cortez, the great Spanish adventurer who had conquered Mexico, or Balboa, who, " silent upon a peak in Darien", had seen a



SIR FRANCIS DRAKE KNIGHTED BY QUEEN ELIZABETH

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new ocean, where never yet had a European ship sailed : or of Magellan, the Portuguese captain, who had actually found his way to that ocean at a later day, by sailing round the extremity of the New Continent. And in the boy's heart grew a great longing to go and see these places for himself.

Presently, the time came when the Drake family had to leave their pleasant home in Devon, for their part of the country was full of trouble owing to differences of opinion on religious matters, and Francis' father was made a Chaplain of the Royal Navy at Deptford. Here, too, the boy grew up among sailors, and being no good at his books, he became friends with an old shipmaster, who gave him a post on his vessel, and took him trading to the Channel ports. The old captain soon conceived a great love for Francis, and when he died, he left him the vessel in his will ! So for many years Francis Drake worked steadily in his profession as a merchant captain, and prospered and grew rich. But he never forgot the dreams of his boyhood. And one day the chance came. His cousin, William Hawkins, was fitting out an expedition to the Spanish Main. Drake, now twenty-seven, asked if he might come too, and he was accepted. He gladly sold his old ship,

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and bought in its stead a smart new vessel, the *Judith*. In a few days, he was at anchor in Plymouth Sound, back in his beloved west country. In due time the expedition, consisting of the *Judith*, the *Jesus*, and the *Minion*, set sail for the West Indies, where they traded very successfully, and filled their holds with spices, sugar, tobacco, and other valuable cargo. And then bad fortune overtook them. The first stroke was when they suddenly ran into a terrible hurricane, which so damaged the ships, that they had to put into the port of San Juan de Ulloa in Mexico. And then, as ill-luck would have it, they arrived there just as a great Spanish fleet also appeared ! The Spaniards were terribly jealous of the English, whom they regarded as intruders, and a fierce battle was the result. The English fleet consisted of three ships and the Spanish of thirteen, so it is not surprising that Hawkins was beaten. The *Jesus* was sunk, and many of the crew captured, and the other two vessels escaped by the skin of their teeth. Nor was that the end of their troubles ; for on the way home, the crews were attacked by scurvy, that scourge of the sea in olden days, and they only arrived in England with the greatest difficulty.

Drake had now smelt powder, as the saying

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goes. And also he was a ruined man. The Spaniards had sent to the bottom of the sea all his savings, the work of many years. But Drake was not a man who easily forgot or forgave, as you can see if you look at some of the old portraits of him—a stout, thick-set man, with curly hair (a brownish grey, the eagle's colour, I suspect), dark, imaginative and dreamy eyes, and a broad, noble forehead. But his most striking feature is his mouth, good-natured, kind even, but utterly inflexible. Firm, too, is his chin, covered with a short, curly beard. Woe to those who stood in the path of such a one! And so he saved money until he could fit out a small vessel, and quite alone, he stole, one day in 1572, out of the harbour of Plymouth. No one noticed the departure of the little *Dragon*, or troubled about its errand. Sailing quietly over to the Panama isthmus, he hid his small vessel, and then went with his men to an ambush where the pack mules came across from the Pacific side, laden with gold and silver from Peru. The Spaniards never dreamed that an Englishman was within a thousand miles of them. Presently the tinkling of mule-bells and cracking of whips came up the pass. In a trice, Drake and his men leapt out on the unsuspecting convoy, and soon the gold and gems were being

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transferred from the backs of the mules to the hold of the *Dragon*. Drake had recouped his losses and avenged the *Jesus*. But something else had also happened, which was destined to change the course of Drake's whole life. While spying out the ground for his ambushade, he had climbed a very tall tree at the top of the pass. From it he saw what Balboa had seen, far away, down below him, a blue ocean, glittering peacefully in the sunlight. It was the Pacific Ocean, and Drake determined to explore it or die in the attempt. He had now money enough and to spare for his ambitions.

In November 1577, Drake's fleet set out upon the great adventure. His ships were the *Golden Hinde*, 120 tons, commanded by Drake himself, the *Elizabeth* of 80 tons, and two sloops. (In order to appreciate the size of these ships, remember that an ordinary P. & O. mail steamer is 15,000 tons, and that that is not by any means large as modern vessels go.) The total number of the crews was 160. After a bad start, they managed to cross the Bay of Biscay and reach the region of the north-east trade winds, which took them across to the South American coast. Then they ran down the coast, until they found themselves off Patagonia. And here a very terrible tragedy occurred. There was on the

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ship a certain Mr. Doughty, a friend of Drake's. But Doughty was at heart jealous of his leader, and this jealousy grew as time went on. Moreover, as always happened on these long voyages over unknown and uncharted seas, a party among the sailors became frightened and mutinous and clamoured to turn back. Doughty mixed himself up in these intrigues, and one day, one of the sloops tried to desert and go home. Iron discipline alone could save the situation. Drake soon overhauled the deserter, with Doughty aboard her: the traitor was thrown into irons, and the fleet made for the neighbouring Port St. Julien, where the admiral decided to hold a court-martial. And as they landed, an ominous sight greeted them. Suspended from a gallows, and creaking dismally as it hung in chains, swaying to and fro in the wind, was a ghastly skeleton! Fifty years ago, by a strange coincidence, Magellan also had been faced by a mutiny on this very spot, and had stopped to hang one of his crew as a punishment and example. And now, too, an example had to be made. Doughty was guilty of mutiny, treachery and desertion, and for the sake of his comrades he must die. The court-martial unanimously found him guilty. Next morning an awful and solemn scene was enacted on the

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deck of the *Golden Hinde*. Drake and Doughty had once been bosom friends, and Doughty fully realized the justice of the sentence. Together the captain and his prisoner knelt, side by side, before the chaplain and received the Sacrament, the crew looking on in awed and solemn silence. Then Doughty bade farewell to his comrades, kissed and embraced Drake, and laid his neck upon the block. Drake struck the fatal blow with his own hands, and holding aloft the severed head, said loudly in solemn tones, that all might hear, *Lo, this is the end of all traitors*. The other mutineers fell conscience-stricken at the Admiral's feet and were freely forgiven. Drake spoke a few earnest words about the duty of loyalty and obedience, and then all dispersed soberly to their allotted tasks. There were no more mutinies on *that* voyage !

After refitting, the fleet proceeded upon the most dangerous part of their task, namely creeping through the Straits of Magellan into the Pacific Ocean. These straits are seventy miles long, full of islands, rocks, and shoals. They crept along narrow creeks, towed by their boats, with huge avalanches overhanging the ships. The cold was bitter and the decks laden with snow, and sometimes penguins and seals had to be killed for food. And when at last they

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emerged into the Pacific, a great disaster befel them. For a mighty gale arose, and blew the fleet 600 miles south of Cape Horn down towards the Pole ! The waves were such as no man had ever seen for height and violence. The sloop *Marigold* was lost with all hands. Captain Winter staggered back to Cape Magellan, and there, having waited and burnt signal fires for many weeks, at last gave up Drake for dead and went home by himself.

But Drake was not dead. After a weary wait, the gale abated, and he started to coast along the west of South America, until he came to the region of Peru. This was the chief source, in the New World, of the gold mines and jewels, which had made Spain rich, and the Spaniards never for a moment expected any intruder into their domains. Everything was unguarded : at one port, bars of gold were piled up on the quayside without even a watchman to look after them ! But wherever Drake came across the Spanish, he treated them with courtesy. One Spanish captain, whose ship Drake captured, wrote a letter about him, which is very interesting, for it shows how one brave man can look upon another, though he is his foe, with admiration and even affection. "Drake is about thirty-five years of age," writes this captain, "of small stature,

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and a reddish beard. He is one of the greatest sailors in the world. His men are all in the prime of life, and trained for war like veterans. Their arms and accoutrements are kept spotlessly clean. He treats them with affection and they him with respect. He has with him nine or ten young gentlemen, sons of the leading men of England, who form his council : he calls them together on every occasion and hears what they have to say ; but he is not bound by their advice, though he may be guided by it. His dinner service is of silver gilt, engraved with his arms, and he dines to the sound of violins. The gentlemen dine with him ; but none sits down or puts on his hat without permission. He has two draughtsmen with him, who portray the coast in colours, so that those who follow, may do so without difficulty.’

This letter reveals the secret of Drake’s success. First, he loved his men and they loved him : but discipline (as we saw in the case of Doughty) came before his personal feelings. Secondly, his extreme care for details, order, method and cleanliness, small things in themselves perhaps, but all important in a ship or a regiment, is apparent. And now Drake began to think of going home. His little ship was loaded with booty : he had been sailing for two years, and he was 20,000

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miles from Plymouth Sound ! There was, of course, little hope of his returning the way he came, for the Spanish cruisers were now on the alert, and would certainly be waiting off Cape Horn, to send him to the bottom of the sea. Two alternate routes seemed to him to be left. One was to sail up the American coast until the land turned to the east, and this he tried at first. But as his ship crept up the shores of what we now call California and Oregon, the air grew colder and colder, and no signs of any passage eastward appeared. Then Drake conceived another and even bolder idea, and that was to strike due westward to the Indies, and thence round the Cape of Good Hope. Could he reach home by this route, he would have sailed completely round the globe ! If you will look at a map of the world, you will be able to trace the course for yourselves, and this will give you some idea of the vastness of the undertaking. By this time, the *Golden Hinde* was far beyond the northernmost Spanish settlement, in strange uncharted seas, where no white man had ever sailed before. Here he halted for a month. The little ship was docked, scraped and repaired. New ropes, sails and spars were fitted and carefully tested. Attention to detail, you see, was the secret of Drake's success.

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And now, on the July the 23rd 1579, Drake set his course due west, on his next great adventure, the crossing of the Pacific. For sixty-eight long days the *Golden Hinde* held on her solitary course, seeing neither sail nor any sign of life, nothing, day after day, but the wide, limitless expanse of ocean. At last islands were sighted, and coral *attols*, and long lines of surf with a background of palms and blue hills. Drake had reached the Celebes or Spice Islands, now the Dutch East Indies. Here for a second time the *Golden Hinde* was careened and thoroughly overhauled, while the men wondered at the strange sights around them—the fireflies at night (which scared them not a little), the cocoanuts, with their refreshing pulp and cool milk, and the giant land-crabs. They all fraternized with the kindly natives of the islands, and bought large quantities of cloves and other spices, more precious in those days than gems. Now, if you look once more at the map, you will see what a perfect maze of islands lay before Drake, through which he had to thread his way before reaching the open sea. To do this without charts would be little short of a miracle, and sure enough, one day, with a crash which nearly brought the masts down alongside, the poor *Hinde* ran right on a hidden sand-bank! Now, had not

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Drake kept his head, the ship might well have become a total wreck. Mr. Fletcher, the chaplain, began to lament, and to cry that all was lost. Drake tethered him by the ankle to the mainmast, until he learned to behave like a man ! Cannon, stores, even some of the precious silver were thrown overboard, and at last, when the tide rose and the wind changed, the *Hinde* floated off, free and uninjured. At length the network of shoals and reefs was passed, and the sailors felt the long low roll which told them that they had reached the open sea. And now a favourable breeze bowled them along towards the Cape of Good Hope. Long weeks passed, but no one grumbled or repined, for they were on their homeward run. The Cape was passed on June the 15th, and a month later they touched at Sierra Leone for water and provisions. At length, on September the 26th 1580, the long-sought green headlands of England hove in sight, and the *Golden Hinde* dropped anchor in Plymouth Sound, whence she had set out nearly three years before. In the interval, she had sailed right round the world ! Men stared incredulously as Drake and his men stepped ashore. Everyone had long ago given them up for dead. Winter had returned eighteen months previously,

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reporting his companion as lost with all hands off Cape Horn. Still more did they stare as cartload after cartload of golden and silver bars, boxes of doubloons, bags of gems, and bales of spices were unloaded from the hold ! Nor were there waiting jealous and evil-minded men, who reviled Drake as “ the master thief of the New World ”. But Queen Elizabeth knew better. She knew that the cruel Spanish King had robbed and imprisoned peaceful English sailors on their lawful occasions in the southern seas : she knew, too, that Spain was preparing a great Armada to attack England and destroy her. So she caused the *Golden Hinde* to be brought round to Deptford, and there she visited it in state, with all the lords and ladies of the court. Kneeling on his quarter-deck, Drake received the accolade of knighthood at his Royal Mistress’s own hands, as, striking him upon the shoulder with her sword, she bade him “ Rise, Sir Francis Drake ! ” And then she feasted with him in his cabin, and heard from his own lips the story of his perilous rounding of Cape Horn, the plundering of the Spaniards on the Peruvian coast, and the wonders of the Spice Islands. The name of Drake rang through England ; and in far-off Spain, mothers scared naughty children with threats that “ the Dragon ” would have

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them ; even the little *Golden Hinde* became like a sacred relic, visited by men from far and near, as on a pilgrimage.

So ends the story of the quest of the *Golden Hinde*. I cannot, alas, tell you here more of the life of her great admiral : how he sallied forth yet again to ‘sing the beard’ of his old foe, Philip of Spain : how he was playing bowls at Plymouth Hoe, when the Spanish Armada hove in sight, and how, when his captains wanted to break off the match in haste, he said, with a touch of his old humour, “Nay, friends, there’s plenty of time to win this game and thrash the Spaniards too ;” and how, finally, the grand old sea-dog died in a last expedition to Panama, and was buried, as he would have wished, in Mother Ocean.

England his heart, his corpse the waters have :

And that which raised his fame, became his grave.

I think boys of every age and every nation will learn something from the study of the life of this splendid and great-hearted sailor.

CHAPTER X

SIR HUMPHREY GILBERT

A STORY OF THE NORTH-WEST PASSAGE, 1583

I sometimes think it must have been a great privilege to have been alive at all in the spacious days of Queen Elizabeth, when that great movement which we call the Renaissance was spreading like a purifying flood over the old world. Everywhere people were ceasing to be content to live as their forefathers had lived, or to know only what their forefathers had known. And in no way did this feeling express itself so strongly as in the desire to find out what lay across the seas, in those distant lands of which no one knew anything except vague rumours. And if it was a joy in those days to be alive, as the poet says, to be young must indeed have been 'very heaven'. You remember how, in Shakespeare's play, Desdemona sits spellbound, while Othello discourses of

Antres and deserts idle.

Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads touch
heaven,

And of the cannibals that each other eat,
The anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders.

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Among the explorers who were fired by tales like these to go forth and find out these undiscovered countries, not the least gallant were those men who, finding the Cape route to the Indies blocked by the Portuguese, determined to find a route to the Orient by way of the Arctic circle. It is needless to tell you that they did not succeed. The eternal snows took toll of the lives of many brave souls, down to almost our own days, when Captain Franklin and all his men were lost in the attempt to solve the secret. For an empire can only be built up on the lives of its servants, who are willing to sacrifice themselves that others may live. Some of them have achieved imperishable fame by their deeds : others have been content to die, some in the frozen plains, like Franklin, others in the wilds of Africa, like Livingstone or Gordon, whose journal closes with those sublime words : *Thank God, I have done my duty.* It is when we read lines like these, or those equally glorious ones which close another great journal—the last words which Captain Scott wrote while he lay dying in his lonely tent, his comrades sleeping their last sleep all round him, and the blizzard howling outside, that we realize that the spirit of chivalry is not yet dead.

The good knights are dust,
And their swords are rust,

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but their heritage lives on in the hearts of their children. In some of the English universities, on what is called Founder's Day, it is the custom to read, as part of the service, a lesson from the book of Ecclesiasticus, in praise of famous men. This chapter speaks, amongst other things, of those who have no memorial, "who are perished as though they had not been, and become as though they had not been born." Of them, too, it is declared that "their glory shall not be blotted out: their bodies were buried in peace, and their name liveth for evermore". The last sentence, as you know, was chosen as the motto for the war memorials erected all over the Empire in honour of the great company of men and women of all nations, many of them nameless, who gave their lives for us in the Great War.

Of the company of these knights errant was, surely, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, who, with all his crew, perished in the quest of the north-west passage in the year 1583. The idea of finding a passage to India by the north-west route through the Arctic circle had first been suggested to King Henry VII by a stout old Venetian sailor, John Cabot, as far back as 1496. The year following, Cabot set out from Bristol with an expedition, and reached a cool and pleasant shore, which he took to be China, but which

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must, in reality, have been Nova Scotia or Newfoundland. In 1553, Sir John Willoughby and Richard Chancellor set off in the opposite direction, round the north of Norway and Siberia. Willoughby and all his men were frozen to death in their ship off Lapland, and when a later expedition set out, they found this strange company all dead in their ice-bound ship, Willoughby still sitting in his cabinet with his diary and papers before him. But Chancellor reached the shores of Russia, and pushed on to Moscow, where he dined with the Czar "at six o'clock, by candle-light", and eventually reached Central Asia by the overland route. It was this which inspired Sir Humphrey Gilbert to emulate their achievements. Like nearly all the great Elizabethan adventurers, Sir Humphrey was a Devon man. He was born in 1539, being a half-brother of another famous Elizabethan hero, Sir Walter Raleigh. Early in life he went to court, where he fell under the influence of Sir Philip Sidney, the noblest of all Elizabeth's gallants, and we may be sure that he was influenced by Sir Philip's high and chivalrous ideals. He obtained a commission in the army, and won his spurs fighting in the Irish wars. He did so well that, in 1570, he was knighted, and made Governor of Munster. From Ireland

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he went to the Netherlands, where he was the first English colonel in command of English forces in that country. Five years of fighting in the Netherlands were followed by a return on leave to England. But all this time, Gilbert's mind was obsessed by the vision which had captured the imagination of Elizabethan England, the north-west passage to Cathay, the land of Marco Polo, where the Chinese dwelt in great walled cities larger than any in Europe, and went clad in silks which would make an adventurer's fortune. And, further west, he saw in his mind's eye the Spice Islands, and distant India with its gold and pearls and precious stones. In 1576, he published his *Discourse of Discoverie for a New Passage to Cataia*, wherein he sought "to prove a passage by the north-west to Cathay and the East Indies", and offered to discover it "by the travel hazard and peril of his life", only stipulating that in return, he and his heirs should reap the fruits of his discovery.

Queen Elizabeth, the Gloriana of her knights, was never slow in encouraging the undertakings of her loyal subjects. And so, in 1578, Sir Humphrey received letters patent authorizing him to occupy "lands not actually possessed of any people as should seem good to him". After selling all his estates to raise the necessary

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money, Gilbert set out for the north-west. The first expedition ended in failure; but Sir Humphrey was not the man to be discouraged. Though he was a ruined man financially,—his fortunes were shattered by the expense of buying and fitting out his ships—his determination was utterly unshaken. Here is the letter which he wrote to the Queen:—

“Never, therefore, mislike with me for taking in hand any laudable or honest enterprise; for if through pleasure or idleness we purchase shame, the pleasure vanisheth. But the shame abideth for ever.

“Give me leave, therefore, without offence, always to live and die in this mind: that he is not worthy to live at all, that, for fear or danger of death, shunneth his country’s service or his own honour, seeing that death is inevitable and the fame of virtue immortal, wherefore in this behalf *mutare vel timere sperno*.”¹

Surely a nobler letter than this was never penned.

Of Sir Humphrey Gilbert, if of any, it may be truly said that

Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise,
(The last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights, and live laborious days.

At last, in June 1583, the little fleet, the

¹“I scorn to change or fear,” the motto of the Gilbert family.

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Delight, the barque *Raleigh*, the *Golden Hinde*, the *Swallow* and the *Squirrel*, stole out of the quaint, old-world port of Dartmouth, heading westwards. Elizabeth had a foreboding that she would never see her gallant and devoted knight again. She sent him a letter, wishing him "as great good hap and safety to his ship as if herself were there in person", and gave him, as a token of her love, "a golden figure of an Anchor, guarded by a Lady." The whole company only amounted to 260 souls, and, alas, soon after the start, the *Raleigh* deserted and went off home. The rest of the fleet reached Newfoundland without mishap, and took possession of it in the Queen's name. Then the ships sailed northwards, spending the summer taking soundings, and mapping the uncharted creeks on the Labrador coast.

And now disaster began to overtake them. One evening in August, says the old chronicler, the weather was fair and pleasant, "yet not without token of storm to ensue, and most part of this Wednesday night, like the swan that singeth before her death, they in the *Delight* continued in sounding of drums and trumpets and fifes, also winding the cornets and hautboys." Two days later, off Cape Breton, the *Delight* struck upon a hidden reef, and sank

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in full sight of her agonized friends, who were unable to move a hand to help her. But Sir Humphrey pressed on. Bad omens frightened the crews. The electric phenomenon, known by the sailors as "Castor and Pollux", appeared on the mainyard. A great sea-lion came out of the sea in pursuit of the *Hinde*, "yawning and gaping wide, with ugly demonstration of long teeth and glaring eyes; and to bid us farewell, he sent forth a horrible voice, roaring and bellowing as doth a lion." The sailors thought it was the devil. But the admiral laughed at the superstitious fears of his men, saying that it was a good omen, and that he rejoiced, if it *were* the devil, to war against such an adversary!

By now, the short northern summer was drawing to a close. Terrible seas were getting up, breaking short and pyramid-wise, and the fears of all increased, for the admiral insisted on remaining aboard the tiny *Squirrel*, a frail cockleshell of ten tons, totally unfitted to meet such weather. Even the "vehement persuasion" of his friends would not shake his "wilful resolution". To their entreaties he serenely replied, "I will not forsake my little company going homewards, with whom I have passed so many storms and perils". The end which they foreboded came with tragic suddenness.

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“Monday the ninth of September,” writes the chronicler, “in the afternoon, the frigate was near cast away oppressed by waves, but at that time recovered, and giving forth signs of joy, the General, sitting abaft with a book in his hand, cried unto us in the *Hinde*, so often as we did approach within hearing, ‘we are as near to Heaven by sea as by land,’ reiterating the same speech, well beseeeming a soldier resolute in Jesus Christ as I can testify that he was. The same Monday night, about twelve of the clock or not long after, the frigate being ahead of us in the *Golden Hinde*, suddenly her lights were out, whereof as it were in a moment we lost the sight, and without our watch cried, ‘the General is lost,’ which was too true, for in that moment the frigate was devoured and swallowed up of the Sea.” And so Sir Humphrey Gilbert, that “very perfect, gentle knight”, passed into the Great Unknown.—“Thus”, concludes our chronicler, “as he was refined and made nearer unto the image of God, so it pleased the Divine Will to resume him unto Himself, whither both his and every other high and noble mind have always aspired.”

He sat upon the deck,

The Book was in his hand ;

“Do not fear ! Heaven is as near,”

He said, “by water as by land ! ”

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In the first watch of the night
Without a signal's sound,
Out of the sea, mysteriously,
The fleet of Death rose all around.

They grappled with their prize,
At midnight, black and cold !
As of a rock was the shock ;
Heavily the ground swell rolled.

* * * * *

Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast ; no weakness, no contempt,
Dispraise, or blame ; nothing but well and fair,
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.

